



RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating Clickbait Strategies: A CDA of Pakistani YouTube News Channels

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ABSTRACT

YouTube offers earning opportunity for the content creators and current affairs news get an advantage to be watched. The content creators prefer to use particular linguistic choices and designing on thumbnails that could convince the audience to click and watch. This study aims to investigate those click-bait strategies by applying qualitative methodology. For a comprehensive analysis, we have modified a CDA model presented by Bazaco, Redondo and Sánchez-García (2019). The data contains 36 news headlines randomly selected from six YouTube channels. At first level, we look at i) absence of the most important information, ii) unanswered questions iii) using question marks with simple sentences iv) deliberate ambiguity. At second level, we analyzed i) the styles of interrogation at sentence level, ii) the presentation of additional sentences or phrases that are specifically used to add sensationalism in those headlines. The study reveals that the news headlines on YouTube thumbnails are recreated from the main stream media, and commonly follow a question-style to add curiosity. Moreover, specific linguistic items, i.e., adjectives and adverbs are used to encourage people for clicking the certain links. This research may be beneficial to aware the general public to avoid clicking irrelevant or ambiguous news headlines that are written to generate website traffic. Furthermore, the young researchers interested in Critical Discourse Studies may explore other social media platforms for such analyses.

KEYWORDS Click-Bait Content Analysis, Clickbait Content, Sensationalism in News, Social Media News Headlines Analysis, Thumbnails, YouTube

Introduction

YouTube commonly known as entertaining social media app for video streaming has also become a source of sharing news, opinions, articles and other information related to current affairs etc. The information on YouTube is shared in the format of video and that video contains a title and a thumbnail that decide whether the social media users will click the video or not. Therefore, the content creators keep on improving their CTR (Click through Rate) that is the percentage of how frequently people click on a certain video. The news channels on YouTube may share complete headline, might create suspense by putting a question, or could add spice to the title or the headline of the specific content. People have moved towards social media for reading news stories than reading on the newspapers (Mitchel 2018). There is a huge competition among the news channels to generate traffic on their channels because of this new paradigm. Earlier, the newspapers had different marketing strategies to increase the sale or the readership of the paper but on digital media, different strategies are used to face this competition. The only way to generate the audience on social media is to create maximum content, and further convince the social media users to click on the content and rest is content quality that keeps them engaged. Sometimes, news headlines get the clicks but the readers may not stay there to read the whole information because they get the clue and get back to the main page. News headline can be a summary of what the news article is about (Van

Dijk 2013) but on social media, the content creators may skip the main information in order to get the clicks. Welbers and Opgenhaffen (2019) call this strategy 'clickbait-style' for instance, "will the army be appointed in general elections?" in table 7. This question style triggers the audience to know the answer. The other ways to frame this headline could be "what is the army going to do in the election? Must read." By adding certain adjectives, warnings, adverbs or modal verbs, the content creators influence the audience to click on the links provided by the channels. Creating an effective headline to maintain the engagement can be a challenging task for the Social Media Managers at newsrooms (Aldous, An, and Jansen 2019a). The content creators may or may not have a professional media degree as the earning on YouTube has encouraged the non-journalists to share the news articles on social media therefore, the news headlines found on social media might have some issues related to technical journalistic writing, language errors or ethical consideration.

Mencher and Shilton (1997) have shared certain news elements that are followed while sharing the content on the social media. For instance, the topics may focus on an important personality, a famous place where the incident has happened, having higher impact such as assassination or murder, conflict such as war, unusual happenings or something deadly important. For this study, the issues have been randomly selected those having question-style and were recently uploaded.

Literature Review

Digital media is a source of funding for the content creators and the earning is based on the traffic that visits the channels or websites Bazaco, Redondo and Sánchez-García (2019). The trends of targeting the audience with the information on digital media are changing because of this economic model. Earlier, the information could straightforwardly be shared on the newspapers or even on social media before this economic model but now, the content creators are more interested to hide specific information to drag the traffic directly to their own channels or websites. During 1960-1970, TV was considered the most common source for news (Abel and Wirth 1977). There may be different strategies to maintain the viewership on TV, or the readership on the newspaper. For instance, newspaper has to be bought only one time therefore, no information is kept hidden in the headlines but the audience on social media keeps on scrolling channels therefore, it is important to stop them for a while to make them gaze at a certain news-headline and click on that for further reading. According to The Spanish Association for Media Research (AIMC, 2017), 56.5% of the Spanish Internet users used social media sites to keep them updated. Because of gate-keeping, citizens may be provided wrong information (Bazaco, Redondo & Sánchez-García 2019). That means, playing with the news headline for getting more clicks may change the actual meaning or the context of the news or sometimes, it may lead to the fake information that is totally opposite to the headline.

Critical Discourse Analysts give an importance to news discourse and they explore their functions (Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2001) and the role they play for processing the information (Dor 2003). The news headlines may contain several types of text, e.g., passive transformation and nominalization (Fowler 1991), ambiguity (Brone and Coulson 2010), and untensed verbs (Chovanec 2014). The other CDA experts have focused on other concepts such as sensationalism (MolekKozakowska 2013), or click-bait (Blom and Hansen 2015). The current study links the concept of using language to create sensationalism or suspense in order to get more clicks on the websites. According to Kepplinger and Ehmi (2006), it is important to follow news values in journalism. On social media such news values may be avoided by the content creators as their target is

mostly to generate traffic. The term – linguistic style – refers to selecting the words to frame news headlines where main information may be kept hidden.

This linguistic model has been used for the analysis of short texts (Lakkaraju, McAuley, and Leskovec 2013) and tweets (Tan, Lee, and Pang 2014). For instance, doing a word-level analysis rather than looking at the context (Tan, Lee, and Pang 2014; Gatti 2016; Szymanski, OrellanaRodriguez, and Keane 2016). While, doing the analysis we will get some assistance from these models to present a comprehensive analysis of the data. Such analysis may also be taken under the domain of syntactic and lexical simplicity (e.g. Bell 1995). Content creators on social media share the news headlines with a corresponding link (Armstrong and Gao 2010; Holcomb, Gross, and Mitchell 2011) which is the main idea to present our research that what strategies the content creators use to divert the audience to those links. There can be seen a change in the language of social media with the emergence of new technology (Dick 2011; Tandoc Jr 2014), particularly in news headlines. In mainstream media, newspapers give clear understanding about the news or news articles (Van Dijk 2013) and newspaper is sometimes read by using scanning technique. As the social media has got popular (Kwak et al. 2010; Hermida et al. 2012) therefore, the new trend of attracting the audience to read particular content is emerging and the intentions are to bring that audience to the websites (Chen, Conroy, and Rubin 2015b).

The editors and journalists have also modified their style of framing news headlines (Dick 2011). In terms of styles and sentiments, the social media news headlines have been studied across the platforms (Kuiken 2017; Dos Reis 2015; Scacco and Muddiman 2019; Piotrkowicz 2017). Sometimes, the editors use old content with twisted language for generating traffic that does not seem affective as compared to those editors who use fresh content. That means fresh content is more effective to get clicks as compared to the old content (Rajapaksha, Farahbakhsh, and Crespi 2019). Moreover, it depends on the types of audience that is online at particular time. For instance, evening may be the peak time as people come home from offices and get engaged on social media. Various other dimensions regarding user engagement have also been studied where most-clicked items were compared (Tenenboim and Cohen 2015) by looking at the user engagements such as likes, views and clicks (Aldous 2019c). Blom and Hansen (2015) analyzed news from a Dutch news channel and they found that changing the text of the actual headline helped to get more views.

Methodology

The study uses qualitative methodology and we have modified a model presented by Bazaco, Redondo and Sánchez-García (2019) in order to analyze data. They had focused on the other clickbait features therefore, their presented model contains extra elements such as i) Incomplete information, ii) Appeal expressions, iii) Reception and serialization, iv) Exaggeration, v) Soft news.

Table 1
Analytical Model for the Defining Variables of Clickbait

Presentation	Incomplete Information	• Absence of the most important information
		• Unanswered questions
		• Using question marks with simple sentences
		• Deliberate ambiguity
Content	Question Types	• Open-ended Questions
		• Closed-ended Questions
		• Modality in Questions (Future Prediction)
		• Suspense in Questions

At first level, we look at i) absence of the most important information, ii) unanswered questions iii) using question marks with simple sentences iv) deliberate ambiguity. At second level, we analysed i) the styles of interrogation at sentence level, ii) additional sentences or phrases specifically used with those questions in order to add sensationalism. This study focuses on the data that contains interrogative style. For a comprehensive linguistic analysis, we also used NLP – Natural Language Processing Cambria and White (2014) technique to look deeply into linguistic elements found in the data.

Sampling Techniques

The researcher opened the official YouTube channels of the selected media groups and by scrolling randomly selected the news items that were recently published. The snapshot tool was used to capture the images of the thumbnails that were cropped from the corners and their size was reduced to fit in the paper. Each thumbnail along with the translation has been pasted in the discussion chapter.

Sample Size

We have selected six YouTube channels of mainstream media (e.g., Dunya News, Bol News, Express News, Geo News, Dawn News, ARY News). We have taken six thumbnails that contain only question-style for the analysis from the latest uploaded content on YouTube these YouTube channels. There are no specific topics to be selected; rather the selection of those question-like thumbnails has been made on random basis. We collected the snapshots of the thumbnails, later translated them and categorized them in the form of figures holding six images with the translation for each channel separately.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of each media channel containing six headlines is presented separately. We have analyzed the data at textual level and each important word, phrase or sentence has been explained with a logic of using it in a particular context. The use of language has further been connected with the aim of creating click-bait content. The given tables contain thumbnail images on the left side and the translation on the right side.

Table 2
Headlines from Official Channel of Dunya News

Thumbnails	Translation
	Last wicket fell down?? Surprise for Khan from Supreme Court.
	Final Decision of Supreme Court??

	<p>Historical Interview! Mian sb, 4th time prime minister. Friendship with Khan? Governing together? Ch. Nisar told?</p>
	<p>Memory of old fellow came in the crowd. What did Mian sb say??</p>
	<p>Nawaz Sharif not eligible?? Sheikh Rasheed's move!</p>
	<p>Nawaz Shareef took over the ground. Entry of a new player?</p>

Analysis

The first thumbnail of Dunya News contains a simple sentence with a double question mark that adds curiosity. That is a closed ended question that could be started with 'did', i.e., did the last wicket fall? In order to create sensationalism, the designer has used the word 'surprise' that itself is commonly used in the society to amaze someone. Furthermore, there has been an arrow direction towards a black clipart and a question mark has been placed on it. Using multiple question marks creates suspense and there are more chances the reader would click the thumbnail in order to look who is that person behind the question mark. The personality name is "Imran Khan" but "Khan" as a nickname is common in public therefore, media use it frequently. "Surprise for Khan from the Supreme Court" is whole a noun phrase, the purpose of using phrase structures and short sentences it to utilize the given space and keep the text bold that could be easily read. That means, in the given space the content creators try to add the words of their best choice and fit them in the given space that should not disturb their readability.

The second image of table 2 follows the same strategy of using 'double question mark'. Here, the important keywords which add sensationalism are: 'final', decision, supreme court'. All nouns have been selected carefully because readers like to hear the final decisions particularly when they are announced by the Supreme Court. On the left side, 'prisoner no. 804' has been mentioned which points out the ex-prime minister. This strategy can help get more clicks because people might ignore the thumbnail, as they are not sure for whom the decision has been announced.

The third headline seems vague: "friendship with khan" and "governance together" as it is not clear who is going to have friendship with Khan and, who is going to have governance together? "Mian sb" has been mentioned before these vague questions, someone may think that Mian sb is going to have friendship with Khan that looks impossible and the click-rate may increase as people would like to explore whether it is true or not. Moreover, "Mian sb 4th time prime minister?" is a question. That is a closed ended question. We can say, when information is not true or have 'No' answer,

such headlines are used that contain closed-ended questions. If the content creator uses, “why the friendship together” that may illustrate there is a friendship going to occur but the reason is the target of query. But, when it comes to “friendship together” that may illustrate, there might not be any friendship. On clicking the thumbnail, the viewers may get the answer “No” somewhere in the whole video. The adjective word ‘historical’ adds spice to the headline. Furthermore, Ch. Nisar is an important personality here whose words may have worth in political scenario that is the reason his name has been mentioned there ‘Nisar told’.

The fourth headline is a statement of an important personality ‘Nawaz Sharif’ who has been the prime minister of Pakistan for three times. The question ‘what did Mian sb say’ has been linked with an additional information “memory of old friend came”. Someone may be interested to know who that old friend is and, what was the memory? Therefore, this headline is also based on query with a sensational message.

Fifth headline again contains double question mark with a simple statement “Nawaz Sharif not eligible”. The strategy to add sensationalism is using Sheikh Rasheed’s name with a negative word ‘move’. The question that triggers the query is whether Nawaz Sharif is not eligible, or it could be the statement of Sheikh Rasheed. Alternatively, there is another meaning in the headline; is the move of Sheikh Rasheed going to kick Nawaz out of the elections?

The sixth headline contains a simple statement ‘entry of a new player’ that contains a question mark. Who is that new player, or is any new player going to get in? This style of question creates sub-questions in the minds of the readers. To strengthen this question, the keywords “Mian sb managed the ground” that may help get more clicks.

Table 3
Headlines from Official Channel of Bol News

Thumbnails	Translation
	Big increase in petrol prices?
	Chairman PTI discharge from the case?
	Severe punishment for Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi?
	How did the fire set in RJ Mall, Karachi?



Relief announcement for Imran Khan?



Big decision came on Imran Khan's bail.

Analysis

Six images of Bol News contain short sentences with question marks that add sensationalism to the headlines. The English phrase 'Breaking News' adds emphasis and encourages the audience to click. The adjective word 'big' in the first image has been used to create sensationalism and the question mark is again with the simple statement that moves the readers to investigate the new price of petrol that is a basic need of everyday life. The topic itself is sufficient to get clicks but if the price is told on the thumbnail in numbers or digits, people will scroll it after knowing the price. Therefore, it has been told inside the video. Second image asks a question "has Imran Khan been discharge from the court?" but the reality is opposite. The inside content of the video answers as 'No'. Third image contains Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi as important personalities and, the question is about the punishment. That is a closed-ended question whether they are going to have any punishment. The word 'severe' with the punishment has been used to create sensationalism. The fourth headline uses 'How' question because sometimes when the issue gets common and everyone knows that the issue has happened then creators use 'how and why' questions etc. The reason of using such style is to encourage the readers to know the reasons of the incident. If a closed-ended question "did the fire appear"? is asked, it will not get maximum clicks because the issue has already got viral and people knew that the fire occurred in the mall. The word 'Karachi' has been used to specify the location that could attract the people who are associated with Karachi only. The headline could be made general by using the phrase 'One of the biggest cities of Pakistan'. People of all cities could click the link. Headline fifth and sixth contain closed-ended question about Imran Khan, whether he is going to get relief or bail from the court or not? The questions create curiosity that leads to clicking the link. The designers of this channel also used double question marks that may add intensity to the query. Moreover, the word 'big' has been used to give a spicy touch to the headline. Decision itself may not be big rather the association of the decision with people makes it bigger. In a particular context, for particular people there may be one decision important and for other people that decision may not have any importance.

Table 4

Headlines from Official Channel of Express News

Thumbnails

Translation



Big jerk to PTI, President Arif Alvi out?

<p>شیخ رشید کا بڑا اعلان... گرفتار ہو گیا تو... 5 PM Headlines</p>	Sheikh Rasheed's big announcement... if I were arrested...
<p>5 ہزار کا نوٹ بند...؟ 12 AM Headlines</p>	The currency note of 5000 closed?
<p>بلاول ڈیجی کیوں گئے؟ وجہ سامنے آگئی BREAKING NEWS</p>	Why did Bilawal go to Dubai? Reason came on scene.
<p>امام الحق کی شادی، قوالی نائٹ کون کون سے کرکٹرز کی انٹری؟</p>	Imam ul Haq's wedding, Qawali Night Entry of which cricketers?
<p>DSP کے ساتھ لوگوں سے پولیس اہلکار کون کون سے ملوث؟ پولیس اہلکاروں کے ساتھ DSP کے ساتھ ملوث کون کون سے آگئے؟</p>	Which of the police officers with the DSP were involved in the robbery?

Analysis

The word 'jerk' or 'shock' itself has some intensity but adding an adjective such as 'big' with this sort of words may add extra intensity to the story. The first headline uses a phrase with intensity words along with a question 'Arif Alvi out?' The name of this personality has significance as he is the member of PTI and in present context; PTI supporters have some hope from him. That is why the content creator has used fear appeal to attract the audience. Second headline contains a conditional sentence but that is left incomplete which raises a question, i.e., what would Sheikh Rasheed do, if he were arrested? The Urdu word 'Dabang' has different meanings such as: strong, powerful, dictatorial, fearless etc. The phrase 'fearless announcement' can convince the audience to click what that announcement is. There is again a hidden question has been used in this headline. The third headline consists of a simple statement with a question mark: Five Thousand Note Closed? This is not the right structure to frame a question but in all the headlines such style is continuously being followed. The context of this headline is: people use 5000/ pkr note for saving and furthermore, the government wants to end the corruption. People would love to read or watch such news that is linked with their daily economic matters. The incident has much significance to get maximum clicks. Fourth headline contains an open-ended question, i.e., 'why did Bilawal go to Dubai?' while, the fifth and sixth headlines contain closed-ended question, i.e., 'who is going to attend the ceremony?' and 'who was involved in the incident?' In spite of having question-styles in the headlines, the creator has used personality names in 4th and 5th headline while, the

phrase 'shocking facts' has been added to the 6th headline in order to add extra importance to the event and get more clicks.

Table 5
Headlines from Official Channel of Geo News

Thumbnails	Translation
	President in the morning, hijacker at night. Why was Maryam made victim for the revenge?
	Who tried to make death sentence possible?
	Under which law, the ex-officers were announced punishment?
	Clash between Bilawal and Zardari?
	Relief for PTI?
	Why are the teachers subjected to violence?

Analysis

Geo News uses the same art of framing the headlines for YouTube thumbnails, i.e., first and last headlines contain closed ended questions using 'why'. The actions have been associated with the victims but the first headline mentions a specific person while the last headline does not mention which teachers are involved. In fact, while collecting data, we investigated that this story belongs to another country. This is the strategy to keep the headlines ambiguous that may give double or even more than two meanings. People of Pakistan may click such links thinking that the event happened in Pakistan. Second headline is ambiguous and vague as well as two stories seem to be there e.g., death-punishment for a specific person whose name has not been mentioned and, the relief for the poor nation respectively. Moreover, the 2nd headline raises a question for the

person who was involved to get someone punished. There are two inquires in this headline. In the 3rd headline, what would be the nature of the relief, the reader of the thumbnail might not be sure of that therefore, this headline looks general. Some readers may click because they are fed up of expensive things; some may click to get information about gas, bill etc. announcements. Sometimes, such general headlines can give more clicks on certain news. Fourth and fifth headlines are of same nature e.g., question marks have been added with simple statements. Zardari, Bilawal and PTI, these nouns have been added to add importance to the headline. Because of these nouns, the questions make some worth. The analysis shows that if the names are important then these are added and the question is framed in another way. If the names are not important then the headlines are designed by hiding names. For instance, if the name was of any local party the same headline could be - 'relief for a big political party'. The party might not be big but if the name is not kept hidden, the people may skip. The images associated with the headlines have a great worth to understand the context and significance of these headlines but for this short study, we have excluded that part.

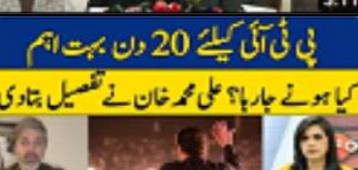
Table 6
Headlines from Official Channel of ARY News

Thumbnails	Translation
	Another accident occurred; 11 houses destroyed. How did the fire set in the mall... big news came. Mother's talk with son over the phone... heart shaking statement
	Has Babar Azam or Sarfaraz ever tried to raise voice for Muhammad Abbas? What did Babar Azam and Rameez Raja say to Abbas?
	Why has Muhammad Abbas been out of the team for a longer period? What's the important reason? Get to know in the words of Muhammad Abbas.
	Are there any differences between Asif Zardari and Bilawal?? Get to know the experts' Analysis.
	How did the fire appear in the shopping mall? Big news came.
	In political parties, why do the party presidents get selected without any competition? Majeed Nizami's important analysis.

Analysis

ARY News uses longer sentences to achieve the target of getting engagement on their channel. There is one central question; how the fire occurred. However, several other phrases or sentences have been added to add spice to each event. Some news contains short headlines but the majority is equipped with heavy text on the images. The font style gets shorter if more text is added. First and fifth headlines have the same topic but these were uploaded with different captions. The first one contains extra information, i.e., the number of houses that destroyed, big news, mother's talk over the phone, hearth breaking statement etc. such phrases have added suspense to the first headline while, fifth one is simple. The topic of these two headlines is an incident and, no important personality has been included. This channel does not only add question marks with simple statements rather write the proper question words with closed-ended, i.e., Yes/No questions. For instance, has Babar Azam or Sarfaraz raised their voice for Muhammad Abbas? Headline three and six use open-ended questions using 'why'. People are usually interested to know the reasons behind the events therefore the frequency of such open-ended questions is greater than those that contain 'how'. Rest is the names of important personalities, which may help the audience, understand the context of the events and that may lead to more clicks.

Table 7
Headlines from Official Channel of Dawn News

Thumbnails	Translation
	Clash between Bilawal and Zardari? Hamid Mir's big prediction, new hustle.
	Will the army be appointed in general election?
	Asif Zardari is going to Dubai to get Bilawal agreed? Rana Ehsan Afzal gave an inside news.
	Did 'Zee' get out of 'Bee'? Faisal Kareem Kandi raised the curtain from the news.
	For PTI, 20 days very important... What is going to happen? Muhammad Ali Khan told the details.



Is an alliance really being made?
Qamar Zaman Qaira gave internal news.

Analysis

Dawn News uses both the styles to write questions-like headlines, i.e., simple statements with question marks in headline no.1 and 3, and proper closed-ended questions with question words. The bottom text contains the names of some persons whose statements might have some worth for the audience, i.e., Hamid Meer's disclosure, Rana Ehsan gave inside-news, Faisal Kareem raised curtain from the news, Muhammad Ali Khan told the details, Qamar Zaman Qaira gave inside-news etc. First headline opens sub-questions for instance why are Asif and Bilawal angry? Second headline gives dual meanings because army is generally appointed in each election therefore, people might extract that it may not be appointed. Fourth headline seems vague as the readers of the thumbnails may not be familiar with "B" and "Z", these might be the initial letters of some personalities that may be explored by clicking the link. In addition, that could be the strategy used for getting more clicks.

Discussions

The goal of this study was to explore the style of news headlines used on the thumbnails of YouTube, and particularly investigating the style of questions in the headlines that trigger the audience to click certain links. Moreover, the analysis of additional phrases and sentences that add suspense, spice and sensationalism to the headlines has also been presented. The purpose of shaping the headlines into clickbait content is to generate more traffic on the channels or websites as the main source of earning for the channels is only possible when they drag the public to watch their content. Overall, the analysis shows that each channel out of six selected channels use the following styles to generate interrogation:

- i) Simple sentences are written with single or double question marks.
- ii) Question mark was also used on a picture where the face was hidden.
- iii) The frequency of closed-ended questions with proper question words, i.e., do/does/is/am/are etc. was less than those simple statements with question marks.
- iv) Vague or ambiguous language was used that directly lead to further questions, i.e., "relief for poor nation". The audience may generate questions such as 'what sort of relief' etc.

Moreover, in order to get more clicks, some other strategies were used. For example, specific adjectives such as 'big', adverbs such as 'extremely' and, the names of important personalities who have some worth in public and people know them. The analysis also identified that most of the statements of the people were used to influence the audience. In terms of topic-domain, political content was dominant in all the channels. A greater number of news was about Imran Khan, Nawaz Sharif, Bilawal and Zardari etc. Furthermore, the relevant images were added with the text to make the context clear for the internet users. Such style of language in news headlines on digital media may change the context or the meaning of the actual information (Bazaco, Redondo & Sánchez-García 2019). The change of meaning or context may create ambiguity and most of the time the readers get confused about an incident, as they are

not sure about the actual context therefore; they click on the link to reach the actual information. There can be two possibilities, i.e., the internal information on that particular channel may have the actual information or, it may not have. The fresh content in this regard can create more impact as it comes to exploring something; people like to explore new information (Rajapaksha, Farahbakhsh, and Crespi 2019). The basic philosophy behind creating question-like headlines is to create suspense and curiosity while the new content itself has curiosity.

Conclusion

In every era, people need some information to get them updated. Earlier, people used to buy newspapers and magazines, then watching TV to get information but with the emergence of technology, a huge number of content creators appeared on the screen to play their role as information disseminators. As the business model of earning through digital ads was involved in the process of dissemination therefore, the quality of news and other information got disturbed. The content creators used those strategies which could help them engage more traffic on their websites and channels and here language and designing played an important role. The current study has investigated those linguistic choices that are particularly used to achieve this target. The research concludes that on social media, news headlines do not contain straightforward information rather these are twisted and some important information is kept hidden that forces the readers to click the link to reach that information. Moreover, question-like headlines are formulated in order to create curiosity in the events. Furthermore, specific adjectives and adverbs are added to create sensationalism. Use of such a language is getting common in digital journalism where the members of the society has to get themselves aware of these strategies so they may not be the victim of false and fake information. The content creators should also follow some ethics of news writing while designing such sort of content. This study may open new directions for the researchers to investigate this sort of language in digital era.

Recommendations

The has focused only on YouTube thumbnails, it is recommended to future researchers to have such analysis on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Ticktok and Instagram. I would like to share further recommendations for the researchers to manage collecting data from Google analytics too and compare that data with the news text and analyse whether those twisted news headlines got the expected clicks or not. Google analytics and YouTube Studio give the details of the user engagement i.e., how many people click, for how much time they stayed on the content to read or watch it and, from which regions people visited the links. Such analysis will be helpful for the content creators to generate rich content. Moreover, it will assist the readers to have a clue that in what ways such headlines are effective to get them engaged in reading.

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