

“Digital Frailty: Proliferation of Clickbait, Beguiled Readers, and Questioning the Morality of Online Journalism”

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Abstract

This decade has seen the elevation in the number of internet users and the rise of online media platforms and the cyber ecosystem. We are witnessing a significant transformation in terms of society, culture, and media. As social media and cyberspaces reaching out the new inventions and connecting the missing dots, fraudulent practices are also on the rise. The use of falsified hyperlinks and thumbnails to lure users into the web of deception has been proliferating. Often regarded as "clickbait," the practice is a becoming a severe concern even for the mainstream media as it is frequently used by leading online portals and news aggregators, putting journalistic ethics on the ledge. The practice initiated with the commercial purpose, often, end up accumulating personal information from users, spreading junk content over the internet, and manufacturing nuisance. Understanding the concept of clickbait has been a challenge itself - hence, this study attempts to comprehend the domain and rationale. Also, it investigates the roots of clickbait and its presence in Indian online news media. Further, it attempts to recognize the victims of clickbait and enquire their vulnerability and perception.

Keywords: Clickbait, Headlines, Social Media, Online Advertising, Fraudulent hyperlinks, Thumbnails, Advertising, Promoted Content.

Introduction

In recent years, the advent of social media rapidly changed the course of the human operations, impacted the landscape of communication, and introduced unprecedented situations. It can be a partial statement to only include social media in this metamorphosis, as the remaining forms of online media have been playing a vital part in the process. Certainly, the discourse generated applause as well as concern in the elites, maybe because the power online platforms possess to alter the offline world. As we are diving far into virtual reality, we are concomitantly changing the pace of our social intercourse. The discussion often initiates the question whether the social media or internet or as a matter of fact, the technology has made journalism worse or better? As research on the untouched topics flourishes, the answer to this question can be unmasked.

The ICUBE 2018 report published by the market research company Kantar IMRB states that the number of internet users in India registered an annual growth of 18 percent and is estimated at 566 million as of December 2018. It also estimated that by the end of 2019, the number of internet users would reach 627 million. This statistic not only indicates the increasing number of internet users but the growth of online advertising and digital

marketing. Revenue in digital advertising markets amounts to US\$5,672m in 2019. In the DAN-e4m-Digital Report 2019, it is clearly noted that the Indian advertising market stands for Rs. 61,878 crores and is estimated to grow with a CGAR of 10.62% till 2021 to reach a market size of Rs. 85,250 crores.

The statistics specify the growth and richness of the digital advertising market in India. Coming to Indian news media, every mainstream media outlet in India went online in the last few years – Moreover, hundreds of new online news portals and YouTube channels can be seen in the race of delivering fast news and information. As per studies, recently, the main aim of online news media platforms is seeming to deliver news speedily, compromising the accuracy and objectivity which troubles the journalism ethics because the content being produced is unauthentic and dishonest. The more clicks or views a news story collects the more financial success it achieves. This equation has started a new era of attention-grabbing-sensational content. When the objective is to earn quick money by luring users to websites with grabbing their attention with the help of flashy headlines or thumbnails, and stimulating their curiosity, the quality, and accuracy of news and journalism is compromised. The practice mentioned above is known as 'clickbait' – which is gradually shearing online spaces like a cankerworm. The proposed study is focused on this term, its nature, application, bribery in journalism, the victims, and their perception.

Definition of Clickbait

According to the Dictionary of Social Media by Oxford Reference, Clickbait is attention-grabbing headlines in social media: A marketing technique designed to attract click-throughs and shares. Click-throughs can be defined in social media metrics as the raw total of those who have clicked on specific links. Google definition for clickbait is as follows: (On the internet) content whose primary purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on the link of a particular webpage. The Merriam-Webster dictionary has established the concept of clickbait as something (such as a headline) designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest. Journalist Katherine Viner mentions clickbait as appalling headlines.

Currently, the practice of clickbait on social media is more frequent than in any other format, making users of social media more familiar with the practice. Facebook explains clickbait as “when a publisher posts a link with a headline that encourages people to click to see more, without telling them much information about what they will see.” This definition can be the excellent specimen of well-crafted euphemism. In a real scenario, clickbait can cause terrible consequences. As the domain of online advertising and spaces are extending with every second - encompassing newer aspects and reflecting new possibilities, a standardized definition of clickbait is yet to be formalized, or on the other hand, we may say that it is in the process of modification.

What exactly is Clickbait?

In a nutshell, clickbait is headlines or thumbnails which are catchy and often sensational, created to stimulate curiosity in reader, so much so that he/she wouldn't be left with an option than clicking on the link which ultimately brings them to unsatisfying and delusional content-produced with financial intentions and pulling traffic or visits to a particular webpage or online portal. The reason clickbait headlines are low regarded is that they do not deliver the

content they promise. The content, if observed minutely, is sensationalized and misleading. It creates a nuisance for reader, project dishonesty, increases junk data, and waste time. Thus, initiating the process of incepting doubt in netizens minds, consequently, endanger online spaces.

Following table depicts usual clickbait headlines and tricks used by culprits to engage readers.

| Headline/Clickbait | Source |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Man tries to hug a wild lion; you won't believe what happens next! | Earth Porm |
| The schoolgirl gives a lunch to homeless man. What he did next will leave you in tears!! | Today.com |
| Remember the baby who played the role of 'baby' in the movie baby's day out? This is how he looks now. Absolutely Hot! (With Pictures and emojis) | Thisimagedoesnotbelongtome.com |
| Man divorced his wife after knowing what is in this photo (With random photo) | Thisimagedoesnotbelongtome.com |
| Only the people with an IQ above 160 can solve these questions. Are you one of them? Click to find out. | Vonvon |
| Supermodels apply these three simple tricks to look young. Click to know what they are. | Thisimagedoesnotbelongtome.com |
| Is your boyfriend cheating on you? He is, if he does these five things. | Facebook post |
| Six surprisingly common reasons you're gaining weight, according to experts (with picture) | Facebook post |
| 15 tweets that sums up married life perfectly. (Number 13 is hilarious) | Facebook post |
| All she did was drag her place across the pool. What happens next blew my mind. | Tapbrainyvines.ninja |
| When you find out what these kids are jumping into, your jaw will drop (with picture of kids jumping) | Sfglobe.com |
| When you read these 19 shocking food facts, You'll never want to eat again | Reddit (Credit) |
| This intense footage will shake the even most skeptic non-believer | Reddit (Credit) |
| This is not a joke. You may laugh, but you shouldn't. It's quite horrifying (with some photo shopped image) | Reddit (Credit) |
| When she places a mug over an egg, it doesn't get any better than this (with picture) | Wikimedia (Credit) |

What exactly not is Clickbait?

In the process of understanding clickbait, it would rather be essential to apprehend the limitations of the concept of clickbait. There lies a sharp dividing line between the exact conception of clickbait and other related terms. The foundation of clickbait depends on

deception and exploitation. If the link or headline delivers the content it promises, and the user is just enticed out of curiosity, then it does not qualify as clickbait. The content indirectly plays a significant role while debating over clickbait. The application of clickbait only comes into play when the manipulation is occurred.

Another critical fact to address is that people always confuse clickbait with concepts like click-fraud, click-farming, phishing, identity theft. Clickbait does not have sinister purposes which distinguish it from other concepts. Often, the prominent aim of clickbait is to pull traffic, grab the attention of the reader, and increase the page views which ultimately done to grow subscribers or attract a broad audience and expand page count or visits on the internet. Practices like phishing and identity-theft involve cybercrime, blackmailing, cyberbullying, and many other vicious violations. We can hardly see the effect of clickbait on an offline world. Although, there are few links which first enticed readers and endeavor towards their involvement in the fraudulent financial scheme by acquiring personal details. However, examples like these are rarely seen.

Clickbait: A fraudulent practice or a smart marketing technique?

What makes clickbait so effective? The reason might bring us to the fact that we cannot see or predict the content we are about to expose. We are just curious, aroused, and startled by the juicy, perhaps sometimes appalling headline. This is basic human psychology, to be tempted and lured by shocking or charismatic theme, or words. Also, in recent times, the online community members discovered a syndrome known as FOMO. It means fear of missing out. People get anxious when they start missing out the action in the online world, which keeps them active over the internet for a significant amount of time compromising their physical and mental health. In light of this, we can see the increasing number of social media users, pages, the digital presence of entities, and businesses over the internet. Competition in the online world to stay in the race is tight and getting worse day by day. As a result, manipulating practices like clickbait are rising. Nonetheless, the questions remain whether the clickbait is a fraudulent practice or a smart marketing technique? In the world of public relations, public relation officers, often known as spin-doctors, use manipulation techniques blatantly. Similarly, in the digital context, clickbait can be a smart marketing technique until it causes serious physical or mental harm.

Indian Online Media Portals, Clickbait, and the Reality

Application of clickbait in digital spaces, at some point, can be tolerable, but, in the context of journalism, it can cause a disruption. Until the last few years, before the dawn of online journalism, the notion of conceiving ill-founded curiosity in readers' mind was yet to be reflected in the society. However, considering the era of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, which led to the emergence of yellow journalism (used shocking headlines to attract readers to sell more newspapers) may illuminate the ongoing circumstances. Clickbait can be the new millenniums yellow journalism. There has been a widespread feeling that social media is to blame for the clickbait era which can be true because the format is widely suitable for social networking sites while most of the clickbait content can be seen spreading through social media networks.

Speaking about journalism and media, the Indian online media can be seen divided into two parts – Legacy or Mainstream Media and Radical or Non-Profit Media. When the ownership and economics of media are debated, legacy media is entirely dependent on advertisers,

whereas radical media is dependent on donations and subscribers. The readers of news portals like Newslaundry and The Ken have to pay and subscribe to access the content. The concept of the paywall is still new, especially in Indian online news media. The Indian audience is habitual to free news as the majority of them have never paid for it in a long time, which explains the dependency of mainstream media on advertisers and multinational companies. This dependency or might as well call it their frailty is provoking them to stay financially sustainable by spreading cheap, mediocre money-grabbing practices.

To ascertain the existent online news portals in the light of clickbait, ten leading Indian news websites were studied. Based on the findings of the study, the content was categorized into five segments, each specifying the contrasting nature and moral. Besides the distinct relation between promoted content, advertisements and clickbait headlines is interpreted. The categorization was drawn from analyzing the following most searched Indian news websites

1. Dainik Jagran
2. Dainik Bhaskar
3. Aaj Tak
4. Nav Bharat Times
5. News 18
6. Times of India
7. Hindustan Times
8. Zee News
9. Amar Ujala
10. The Hindu

For the purpose of dividing content into five segments, 250 news items were analyzed from the above mentioned news websites. The study was conducted during 21st and 22nd of July 2019.

Categorization:

- a) **Advertisements** – Paid advertisements.
- b) **Promoted Content** – Part of a website promotion methodology. Used to increase exposure of website and amount of visitors. Developed for pulling site's traffic, and increase popularity.
- c) **Wrap News** – The name or the actual content is kept hidden in the headline, letting readers assume the news or forcing them to click on it, often developing inevitable curiosity in them. Never reveal the gist. Only generate desire for a click.
- d) **Straight News** – Headline directly revealing the news, information, incident, and narrative. No hidden agenda or wrapped content. Written in bold font, often supported with appropriate picture.
- e) **Clickbait** – Attractive, alluring, sensational, enticing headline manipulating reader by providing false content. Whatever mentioned in the headline cannot be found in the news or actual content.

Following chart neither compare the content of news websites nor indicates the higher percentage clickbait or wrap news on a specific media platform. Few news examples have been given for exploring the idea. All these news items are posted with photographs on the websites.

| Headline/Title | Type | Source |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| High Paying Jobs are in Block chain. Don't Waste Time. Enroll Now | Promoted Content | Danik Jagran |
| भारत और यहां की महिलाओं के लिए खास है 21 जुलाई का दिन, जानें कारण (Supported with a photograph of Pratibha Patil, former Indian President) | Wrap News | Amar Ujala |
| खेत में चला रहा था हल, मिल गया हीरा, बदली किस्मत, रातोंरात लखपति बना किसान | Wrap News | Dainik Jagran |
| कभी ₹200 में खेलते थे, अब टीम इंडिया में चयन | Wrap News | Navbharat Times |
| कभी एक मैच के मिलते थे 200 रुपये, पार की कई बाधाएं और अब मिला नीली जर्सी पहनने का मौका | Wrap News | Dainik Jagran |
| सरदारों पर जोक्स, नहीं बर्दाश्त कर सकता: दिलजीत | Straight News | Navbharat Times |
| Priyanka Fit to Lead, Congress Will Split Within 24 Hours Under Non-Gandhi Chief, Says Natwar Singh | Straight News | News 18 |
| Another mom is making money by working from home | Promoted Content | Times of India |
| Priyanka's smoking pics from Miami divide Twitter | Straight News | Hindustan Times |
| राहत इंदौरी से कपिल ने पूछा, क्या है रोमांटिक इंसपिरेशन? मिला ये जवाब | Wrap News | Aaj Tak |
| अंबानी ने लगातार 11वें साल सैलरी पैकेज नहीं बढ़ाया, 15 करोड़ रुपए पर स्थिर | Straight News | Dainik Bhaskar |
| One killed, many others rescued from fire at Mumbai building | Straight News | The Hindu |
| लुंगी पहनकर जब रेस्तरां में घुसने लगा युवक तो होटल के स्टाफ ने किया कुछ ऐसा | Clickbait | Amar Ujala |
| Become an Artificial Intelligence Engineer by 2020. Apply Today! | Promoted Content | The Hindu |
| 'Restore Democracy': Mamata trains guns at BJP at mega Martyrs' Day rally in Kolkata | Straight News | Zee News |
| This bride wore a green Sabyasachi lehenga! | Wrap News | Times of India |
| Umpire Kumar Dharmasena admits an error in World Cup 2019 final | Straight News | Hindustan Times |
| खुद पुलिस को फोन कर बुलाया और फिर लड़की के शव के साथ करने लगा ये काम | Clickbait | Amar Ujala |

Following observations were made based on the results of the study:

- The use of clickbait is more frequent in regional and Hindi news websites than English news websites. While studying news stories, most of the clickbait content was found on Hindi news websites.
- Most of the wrap news content were available in entertainment, sports, and lifestyle beats. It seems news websites do not try the phenomenon with hard news.
- Promoted content and advertisements were found on every website.
- Overall, the clickbait headlines were less found than the wrap news.

It has to be noted that there is a thin line between the clickbait headlines and headlines hiding the substance of news story. For example, during analyzation, a news story about Indian Cricket team captain Virat Kohli having a doppelganger perceived as clickbait to the researcher, but, further investigation revealed that a video of a person who nearly looks like the Indian skipper had gone viral on twitter. Such a post should not be categorized as clickbait. Another example was taken into the account while investigation – Official twitter handle of ISRO wished luck to Akshay Kumar’s upcoming space drama ‘Mission Mangal.’ While delivering this news, a local news website deliberately provided a blurred screenshot of ISRO’s tweet and evoked the curiosity in the reader’s mind. These are simple tricks and hacks used by reporters and editors these days.

In journalism studies, we studied different types of headlines. For example, the cross line, drop line, inverted pyramid, hanging intention, flush left, the astonisher. One might argue that the examples used in the table represent the different types of headlines. The question of clickbait might not arrive in the debate. As Rakow (1986) points out, media content can never be a true account of reality. So what about media content fabricating the reality? McLuhan (1964), way before the rise of the network society, said all media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values. Also, while discussing journalism, McLuhan (1969) quotes, ‘headlines are icons, not literature.’ These statements define the actual nature of the headline, which is to lead readers to the primary material of news or a story. However, when the substance is fabricated, and headline contributes to the manipulation, the morality of journalism is questioned.

Research Objectives

This study was conducted with four significant objectives. However, it is also expected to introduce the various aspects of clickbait briefly. The domain of clickbait shares a multidisciplinary approach. It can be studied from the perspective of media, psychology, marketing and advertising, computer science and web technology, and also, sociology. Present study represents an overview of clickbait with its impact on media and journalism field. Apart from this, present study attempts to find out the most vulnerable age group to the practice of clickbait usage, also, their perception and reaction to it. Following are the four specific objectives for the study:

- A) To explore the existence of clickbait in Indian online news media.
- B) To find out the most vulnerable age group to the attacks of clickbait
- C) To analyze the reaction of respondents to the clickbait
- D) To understand the perception of respondents towards clickbait

Literature Review

As mentioned before, while investigating the related work on clickbait, a researcher was exposed to various aspects of clickbait. A few research papers had been selected for further investigation pertaining the present perspective of the study. Researcher did not come through any particular manuscript or book devoted to the thorough study of clickbait. However, an ample number of research papers were available for study.

Rony, Hassan, and Yousuf (2017) questioned the reader's reliability in the wake of clickbait. Authors have implemented a large scale analysis to understand the vulnerability of readers. They have managed to create a model which uses distributed sub-words embedding's learned from the large corpus. The researchers have been successful in analyzing 1.67 million Facebook posts created by 153 media organizations. Their scrutiny revealed the fact that broadcast type media has higher percentage of usage of clickbait practice than the print media and non-news type broadcast media mostly contributes to it. There is also a higher percentage of clickbait practice by unreliable media outlets. This research has contributed a great deal to this domain.

Nathan Hurst (2016), in his thesis submitted to the Missouri-Columbia university, discusses the source credibility perceptions between public relation sources (research institutes) and news sources (journalistic organizations) when clickbait headlines are used. A different perspective has been criticized here, investigating the perceived credibility of the news source. According to the findings of the research, readers expect a sensational story after primed with sensational headline, moreover, they feel tricked or used when their expectations are not met in the reality.

Chakraborty, Paranjape, Kakarla, and Ganguli (2016) have introduced a browser extension which automatically detects the clickbait and warns users about possible media sites which are baited by such headlines. This is application research which will surely benefit the users who spent more time on the internet. By comparing the clickbait and non-clickbait headlines and highlighting many interesting differences in these two categories, researchers have developed the chrome extension which gives readers an option to block clickbait's.

A detailed study on the clickbait titles is done by Beleslin, Njegovan, Vukadinovic (2017) which projected a negative attitude of readers towards catchy headlines. In a quantity analysis, investigating a presence of clickbait titles on a corpus of 1.619 news articles from Serbia's most read daily newspapers. The main conclusion of this research points out the negative attitude of readers and tendency to avoid reading news articles with flashy headlines. Researchers found out clickbait headlines make up two thirds of published news in the most visited sections of media portals.

Research Methodology

Both Qualitative and Quantitative method has been applied to this study, emphasizing two significant aspects of the subject. It was intended to cover a large geographical area, but due to a few restriction and difficulties, it was not possible. The research area for the present study is confined to the city of Pune only. Pune is one of the most economically and financially growing city of Maharashtra. It has also been on the list of smart city project by the Indian government launched in the year of 2015.

A questionnaire was designed to collect the responses of participants. The questionnaire has three segments each carries four questions. A Likert scale method has been employed in a questionnaire to gather precise responses. The questions are closed-ended with a five-point scale ranging from Strongly disagree (5) to Strongly Agree (1). The prominent aim of the questionnaire is to calculate the vulnerability, reaction, and perception of the respondents to clickbait. Majority of questionnaires were sent online (e-mail) to the participants, and

remaining were filled up using personal interview method. It was ensured that all the participants are familiar to internet use and comfortable with digital devices.

Respondents hailed from the central part of the Pune city. The respondents were categorized by their age. The purposive sampling method were employed for this research. A sample size of 30 was selected. Participants were categorized as Teen, Adults, and Old. The criteria for first age group Teen was 11 to 18 years, Adults 35 to 55 years and older above 55 years. During the initial phase of the proposed study, it was observed that most participants seem to be unaware of the term clickbait but familiar with the application of it. Since this aperture was discovered, questions from all the three segments do not mention of clickbait overtly but elucidate the term.

Three hypotheses are formulated. Kruskal-Wallis test is used for hypothesis testing. Also known as the H test or one-way ANOVA on the ranks, Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric method for testing whether sample originates from the same distribution. It is used for comparing two or more independent samples of equal or different sample sizes.

Data Analysis

Objective A: To find out the most vulnerable age group to the attacks of clickbait

Hypothesis: For this above objective, a null and alternative hypothesis has been formulated.

H_{1a}: There is a significant relation between respondent's vulnerability to the clickbait and their age group.

H_{1b}: There is no significant relationship between respondent's vulnerability to the clickbait and their age group.

Table One: Vulnerability to the Clickbait

| Indicat or No. | Indicator | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|----------------|---------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | I often enticed to flashy and sensational headlines | 11(36.6) | 4(13.3) | 4(13.3) | 5(16.6) | 6(20.0) |
| 2 | I often end up clicking on alluring thumbnails | 9(30.0) | 6(20.0) | 5(16.6) | 3(10.0) | 7(23.3) |
| 3 | I often jump pages to pages surfing online and find junk content | 7(23.3) | 5(16.6) | 6(20.0) | 4(13.3) | 8(26.6) |
| 4 | Sometimes I share my personal information to dubious links knowing their unauthenticity | 3(10.0) | 3(10.0) | 6(20.0) | 9(30.0) | 9(30.0) |

Table Two: Kruskal-Wallis – Vulnerability to the Clickbait

| Indicators | Teens | | Adults | | Old | | Kruskal-Wallis Test | |
|------------|-------|------|--------|------|------|------|---------------------|---------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | H Statistic | P-Value |
| 1 | 2.12 | 2.06 | 2.14 | 1.67 | 2.00 | 1.67 | 0.06 | .97 |
| 2 | 2.22 | 1.09 | 2.00 | 0.89 | 2.32 | 1.41 | 0.05 | .99 |
| 3 | 2.14 | 0.89 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 1.41 | 0.00 | 89 |
| 4 | 2.16 | 2.44 | 2.00 | 1.09 | 2.00 | 0.89 | 0.185 | .91 |

***Significant at 0.5 level**

Objective B: To analyse the respondent’s reaction to clickbait

Hypothesis: For this above objective, a null and alternative hypothesis has been formulated.

H_{2a}: There is a significant relation between respondent’s reaction to the clickbait and their age group.

H_{2b}: There is no significant relationship between respondent’s reaction to the clickbait and their age group.

Table Three: Reaction to the Clickbait

| Indicators No. | Indicators | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|---|----------------|---------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | I always manage to stay away from catchy headlines. | 8(26.6) | 5(16.6) | 4(13.3) | 6(20.0) | 7(23.3) |
| 2 | I get annoyed by the junk content. | 19(63.3) | 7(23.3) | 2(6.6) | 2(6.6) | 0(0.0) |
| 3 | I immediately close the window once I am exposed to fraudulent links. | 11(36.6) | 5(16.6) | 4(13.3) | 6(20.0) | 4(13.3) |
| 4 | I often find content derived by alluring links highly entertaining and sensational. | 11(36.6) | 8(26.6) | 6(20.0) | 3(10.0) | 2(6.6) |

Table Four: Kruskal- Wallis Test – Reaction to the Clickbait

| Indicators | Teens | | Adults | | Old | | Kruskal-Wallis Test | |
|------------|-------|------|--------|------|------|------|---------------------|---------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | H Statistic | P-Value |
| 1 | 2.06 | 1.78 | 2.04 | 0.63 | 2.00 | 0.89 | 0.185 | .91 |
| 2 | 2.10 | 3.08 | 2.08 | 2.75 | 2.00 | 1.09 | 0.965 | .61 |
| 3 | 2.00 | 2.09 | 2.02 | 1.09 | 2.14 | 0.89 | 0.465 | .79 |
| 4 | 2.00 | 2.28 | 2.00 | 0.89 | 2.00 | 0.97 | 0.38 | .82 |

***Significant at 0.5 level**

Objective C: To understand the perception of respondents towards clickbait

Hypothesis: For this above objective, a null and alternative hypothesis has been formulated.

H_{3a}: There is a significant relation between respondent’s perception to the clickbait and their age group.

H_{3b}: There is no significant relationship between respondent’s perception to the clickbait and their age group.

Table Five: Perception of Clickbait

| Indicator or No. | Indicators | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------------|--|----------------|---------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | I am familiar with the term Clickbait | 3(6.6) | 3(6.6) | 2(6.6) | 7(23.3) | 15(50.0) |
| 2 | The Online spaces are stuffed up with false advertisements and links | 11(36.6) | 6(20.0) | 5(16.6) | 7(23.3) | 1(3.3) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 3 | The intent behind the formation of fraudulent links is monetary | 14(46.6) | 4(13.3) | 6(20.0) | 3(10.0) | 3(10.0) |
| 4 | The content linked to flashy headlines is always unauthentic and grapevine | 18(60.0) | 4(13.3) | 7(23.3) | 1(3.3) | 0(0.0) |

Table Six: Kruskal-Wallis Test – Perception of Clickbait

| Indicators | Teens | | Adults | | Old | | Kruskal-Wallis Test | |
|------------|-------|------|--------|------|------|------|---------------------|---------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | H Statistic | P-Value |
| 1 | 2.02 | 0.89 | 2.12 | 1.78 | 2.18 | 3.52 | 1.805 | .45 |
| 2 | 2.10 | 1.09 | 2.00 | 0.63 | 2.14 | 2.19 | 0.42 | .81 |
| 3 | 2.18 | 3.09 | 2.14 | 1.54 | 2.14 | 1.54 | 0.96 | .61 |
| 4 | 2.20 | 3.52 | 2.10 | 2.19 | 2.08 | 1.78 | 0.61 | .71 |

***Significant at 0.5 level**

Findings and Results:

- Table number one discusses the respondent’s vulnerability to the clickbait’s. 36.3 percent sample is strongly agreed to their submission to flashy and sensational headlines. 13.3 percent sample is agreeing and neutral and 16.6 percent is disagreeing while 20.0 percent participants have shown their strong disagreement. 63.3 percent people strongly agreed to clicking on alluring thumbnails, while 20.0 is agree, 16.6 is neutral, 10.0 percent is disagreeing, 23.3 percent is strongly disagreeing. 23.3 percent sample is strongly agreeing that they jump pages to pages while surfing on internet due to clickbait advertisements. 16.6 percent agreed whereas 20.0 percent stayed neutral. 13.3 percent is disagreeing and 26.6 percent is strongly disagree. While 10 percent strongly agreed and agreed on sharing personal information to clickbait’s, 20 percent remained neutral and 30 percent were disagree and strongly disagree.
- Table number two depicts that first indicator found not significant at .97 along with the remaining three indicators respectively at .99, .61, .91. Table revealed that none of the indicators are significant hence the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative is accepted which clearly reveals that there is no significant relationship between the vulnerability of respondents to the clickbait and their age group.
- Table number three while debating over reaction of respondents to clickbait revealed that 26.6 percent are strongly agree to their carefulness over clickbait. 13.3 percent is neutral to the statement. 20 percent is disagreeing and 23.3 percent showed their strong disagreement. Majority of 63.3 percent sample confessed that they are annoyed by the junk content. 23.3 percent agreed while 6.6 percent stayed neutral. 6.6 percent were disagreeing and no one was strongly disagreeing. 36.6 percent is strongly agreeing that they close the window immediately once they are exposed to clickbait. 16.6 percent is agree and 13.3 percent are neutral. 20.0 percent are disagreeing and 13.3 percent are strongly disagree. 36.6 percent are strongly agreed to the fact that they found the content derived by clickbait entertaining. 26.6 percent were just agreed; 20.0 percent were neutral. 10.0 percent are disagreeing where 6.6 percent showed their strong disagreement.

- Table number four indicates that none of the indicator is significant at 0.5 percent hence the null objective is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. It means there is no significant relationship between the reaction of respondents to clickbait and their age group.
- To check the perception of people towards clickbait close ended questions were asked. Table number five revealed that 50.0 percent sample is strongly disagree to the fact that they are familiar with the term clickbait. 23.3 percent were disagreeing. While 6.6 percent were neutral, agree, and strongly disagree. 36.6 percent are strongly agreeing to the fact that online spaces are full up with false advertisement links. 20 percent are agreeing. 16.6 percent are neutral and 23.3 percent disagree. 3.3 percent are strongly disagreeing. 46.6 strongly believed that the intent behind clickbait is monetary. 13.3 percent are agreeing to the fact, and 20 percent are neutral, 10 percent are disagreeing and strongly disagree. 60 percent sample strongly agreed to the statement that content linked to the flashy headlines is unauthentic and grapevine. 13.3 are agreed whereas 23.3 remained neutral. 3.3 percent are disagreed to the statement while no one chose the strongly disagree option.
- Table number six revealed that null hypothesis should be rejected because none of the indicator is significant at 0.5 level. All indicators have P value less than 0.5, hence, no indicator is significant. The alternative hypothesis is accepted i.e. there is no significant relationship between the perception of respondents to the clickbait and their age group.

Conclusion:

- Indian online news media is expanding on a large scale. Perhaps, in upcoming years, we may see the shutdown of leading print mediums. Having said that, the growth of digital marketing and online advertising has a significant impact on online journalism. However, there is a big difference between the headline structures, nature, and intent. Clickbait journalism is yet to be completely explored in India. To understand the difference between clickbait headlines and news headlines, the researcher invented five categorize and provided a table with examples. The study revealed the fact that not every story with the attractive or sensational headline is a clickbait. The content defines the nature of the story.
- The quantitative analysis suggests that no specific age group is vulnerable to clickbait. Before the analysis, it was assumed that older people are more susceptible to clickbait content, but the results showed the contradiction. On these grounds, we can argue that vulnerability to clickbait is dependent on the psychology of readers, not their age group. Also, most of the participants were unaware of the term clickbait but familiar with its operations. The results proved that the factor of age could not be held responsible while debating over clickbait.
- To prevent people from clickbait and understanding the domain of it, the window of media literacy should be opened. Media literacy is attaining the ability to evaluate and analyse media texts. External forces cannot always intercept internet users from the web of clickbait. Hence, the ability to recognize fraudulent practices should be achieved on their own.

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