



THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF CLICKBAIT ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY CASE OF INSTAGRAM POSTS

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Abstract:

The rapid advancement of media, information, and technology has made all information available online. Clickbait photo posts are one area of linguistics and media study that can be conducted. The structure of clickbait photo posts needs to be examined, and information on frequently used words and phrases that relate to clickbait needs to be provided. Additionally, the significance of photo posts in social media needs to be discussed. The analysis of Instagram's clickbait photo posts was the main goal of this study. Qualitative research was used to conduct this study. The Instagram photo posts were used to collect the data. The idea of Biyani et al. (2016) regarding the categorization of clickbait was then used to their analysis. According to the statistics, clickbait was used in more than half of the 20 Instagram data points that were collected to persuade readers to click on the captions or content. From the data results, it was revealed that from twenty Instagram photo posts, it was found 2 data as exaggeration, 4 data as teasing, 3 data as inflammatory, 3 data as formatting, 1 data as bait-and-switch, and 7 data as ambiguous. Ambiguous was the most category used on Instagram photo posts as a clickbait. It happens because the user tries to attract the consumer's curiosity to buy their product. It can also make the consumer to find more description about the product to make them get valid information.

Keywords: *Clickbait, Photo Posts, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Some internet publishers have started using attention-grabbing titles in their news pieces in a competitive manner in an effort to draw readers in. These posts—also referred to as clickbait—are an example of deceptive content marketing since they give readers the impression that they can find significant information outside of the main text. Within the media domain, certain news headlines that have been meticulously created to enhance website traffic are referred to as "clickbait." But these news headlines drew more and more flak for giving readers only part of the story's true story (Losi et al., 2022).

In all media markets, particularly visually-focused social media like Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat, clickbait is becoming an increasingly serious issue. These websites usually use an image as the primary content, with a brief text that provides further details in an easy-to-read and concise manner (Hoffmann, 2013). Users may occasionally be presented with nothing more than photographs to click on (e.g., a search result displaying thumbnails of images that match a specific phrase). As a result, people anticipate that textual content will accurately represent visual stuff, and users anticipate that text will enable them to search for certain interests or content. However, there is frequently a mismatch between these two cues, making indexing and searching difficult. Because these articles aim to reach a wider audience and persuade users to see

advertisements, memes, and marketing efforts, clickbaits in visual media should be redefined as mismatched combinations of images and text (Amperawati, 2022).

In the context of social media, clickbait is defined as false and overly dramatic headlines and hashtags that are frequently paired with fictitious photos with the sole goal of luring the viewer to click on them. Clickbait headlines and images capitalize on the "curiosity gap" by offering a teaser message that piques the interest of social media users, but not enough to satisfy their curiosity without clicking through to the related post or link. This approach frequently ignores the intended audience for the content. Clickbait is annoying to both consumers and brands. Users expect to be sent to relevant content when they click on a hashtag or link, but when clickbait is present, they frequently end up on irrelevant or low-quality content. The user is frustrated as a result and has a bad experience. However, it harms the brand's standing and potential for future interaction (Jain et al., 2021).

This research focused to present the linguistic features of clickbaits which were found on Instagram. Previous research has concentrated on the generic form of clickbait, which is characterized by linguistic patterns and dissonance between the headlines and the body text that goes with them. The closeness between a headline and the content that goes with it, the casual tone of the post, and forward referencing—which leaves information gaps—are the main characteristics that are used to categorize clickbait (Vanessa & Ibrahim, 2024). Based on the characteristics of exaggeration, teasing, provocative content, formatting, graphics, bait-and-switch, ambiguity, and incorrectness, one study classified several forms of clickbait (Woolley, 2018).

The researcher applied the eight-classification theory of Biyani et al. (2016) to identify the clickbait. According to Kemm (2022), in order to solve the issue of clickbait detection, variables that are reliable predictors of clickbait must be designed and then combined with a machine-learned model to enable automatic determination of whether an item is clickbait or not. They make use of a range of characteristics taken from a webpage's body, title, and URL, including content, degree of informality, and resemblance between the title and body.

Table 1. The Eight-Classification Theory of Biyani et al. (2016)

Type	Definition
Exaggeration	The landing page's substance is overstated in the title.
Teasing	Details in the title are left out in order to create tension.
Inflammatory	Either word choice or usage of offensive or profane language.
Formatting	Overuse of punctuation and capitalization, especially using full capital letters or exclamation points.
Graphic	Content that is obscene or uncomfortable.
Bait-and-switch	The landing page does not provide the information that the title suggests or promises. Either more clicks are needed, or it's missing entirely.
Ambiguous	Title should be ambiguous or confusing to pique interest.
Wrong	Simply said, this article is factually untrue.

RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research was used to conduct this study. According to Rangkyu et al. (2024), qualitative research is defined as the study of phenomena, frequently in-depth and holistically, using a flexible study technique and the collection of rich narrative materials. Comparatively speaking to quantitative research, qualitative research aims to offer comprehensive understanding and insights into real-world issues. It doesn't change, add treatment, or put a number on any one issue.

The researchers used this approach since the study used text as data and involved a number of data analytic procedures. The data was collected from posts on Instagram. Twenty posts were selected from the photo posts of random Instagram users. Most of photo posts which were used by the researchers were advertisement posts. For this study,

the researchers evaluated the data using photo posts, which were statements and words. The three steps the researchers used to acquire the data were reading the photo posts to understand the content of the posts, classifying the photo posts in accordance with clickbait, and creating a list of the data that have been chosen (Losi & Rosida, 2022). The data was first categorized by the researchers using the theory proposed by Biyani. The classified material needed to be interpreted next. Coming to an investigational conclusion was the last step.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty clickbait captions were collected from Instagram posts. The clickbait captions are categorized based on Biyani et al. (2016) theory. The findings were analyzed as follows.

Table 2. The Data Results

Type	Data Found	Sources
Exaggeration	2	@panco.id
Teasing	4	@jcoindonesia
Inflammatory	3	@wendys
Formatting	3	@wardahbeauty
Graphic	0	-
Bait-and-switch	1	@maybelline
Ambiguous	7	@wendys
Wrong	0	-
Total	20	-

The analysis of the data found was explained as follow:

1. Exaggeration

Exaggeration occurs when the landing page's substance is overstated in the title. This type of title makes overuse of meaning-laden words to draw in readers. A statement that portrays something as better or worse than it actually is is referred to as exaggerated.



Figure 1. Exaggeration Example
(Source: @panco.id)

The photo post showed an exaggeration that everyone can't hold on to not eat the pan which is extremely fluffy. The fluffiness tells that the cake is very delicious and soft.

2. Teasing

Teasing is the practice of leaving out information from the title in order to pique the reader's interest. A title that teases or mocks someone in a lighthearted manner is known as teasing. This is typically achieved by omitting specific characteristics from the title in order to create tension.



Figure 2. Teasing Example
(Source: @jcoindonesia)

The photo post showed a teasing phrase where the user ommit the letter ‘o’ on the word “pop”. The user replace the letter ‘o’ by using strawberry boba which is similar with the letter ‘o’.

3. Inflammatory

The phrase "inflammatory" denotes the use of improper or obscene language in the title's phrasing or usage. Through the use of improper or vulgar language, it seeks to elicit or evoke feelings of curiosity, wrath, mistrust, and so forth.



Figure 3. Inflammatory Example
(Source: @wendys)

The photo post used ‘naked’ word and it is categorized as inflammatory because it is a vulgar word.

4. Formatting

Formatting is known by there is overuse of punctuation and capitalization, especially using full capital letters or exclamation points.



Figure 4. Formatting Example
(Source: @wardahbeauty)

The photo post used capital letters in 'THE EYEVERLASHTING THEORY#3' as a characteristic of formatting.

5. Bait-and-Switch

The information implied or promised by the title is not present on the landing page. Either it's completely missing, or more clicks are required.



Figure 5. Bait-and-Switch Example
(Source: @maybelline)

The photo post shared an information about a pencil and an eraser but on the photo there is no any pencil or eraser. There are some lipsticks. This kind of clickbait invites the viewer to click more on the photo to get the complete information.

6. Ambiguous

Ambiguous means that the title is presented using unclear or confusing words to spur curiosity.



Figure 6. Ambiguous Example
(Source: @wendys)

The photo post invited the viewer to do a messy thing, whereas Wendys is a restaurant which sells fast food. The information on the photo is ambiguous for the viewer.

From the data results, it was revealed that from twenty Instagram photo posts, it was found 2 data as exaggeration, 4 data as teasing, 3 data as inflammatory, 3 data as formatting, 1 data as bait-and-switch, and 7 data as ambiguous. Ambiguous was the most category used on Instagram photo posts as a clickbait. It happens because the user tries to attract the consumer's curiosity to buy their product. It can also make the consumer to find more description about the product to make them get valid information.

This research was in line with Amperawati (2022) who found that to be considered effective, social media promotions on Instagram must be measured by performance and success in terms of reaching or failing to reach predetermined targets. You only need to download the app or open the website by logging in if you already have an account or signing up if you don't, as using Instagram social media is incredibly simple and cost-free. Vanessa & Ibrahim (2024) also revealed that it's true that some clickbait elements encourage readers to click more than others. In particular, headlines with lists and the word "wh" got more clicks than those with modals, whereas headlines with questions got fewer clicks than those with lists. Notwithstanding these variations in clickbait headlines, non-clickbait outperformed the other three and generally garnered more clicks than four of the seven clickbait traits. Moreover, no statistically significant variations were seen in the sharing behavior according to the features. These findings show that, contrary to popular belief, clickbait headlines do not necessarily result in more clicks than non-clickbait headlines. Users who come across non-clickbait headlines or other social media content are just as likely—if not more so—to interact with it.

Users' perceptions of non-clickbait headlines can help to explain the general preference for them. To begin with, headlines with lists and demonstrative adjectives piqued readers' interest more than those with other clickbait elements. On the other hand, non-clickbait aroused more interest than the five clickbait qualities that were reviewed and was equally stimulating as these two traits. This contradicts the idea that by creating a curiosity gap, clickbait headlines will pique readers' interest more than non-clickbait headlines.

CONCLUSION

The advancement of digital literacy has not kept pace with the growth of information technology (Vanessa & Ibrahim, 2024). Concern over clickbait on visual social media is growing because it hurts consumers and marketers who use the media to modify or exchange essential product information. According to our investigation,

clickbait may be classified rather successfully using a multimodal, machine learning-based technique. However, we also discovered that certain clickbaits purposefully display characteristics that are common to normal posts, making them difficult to differentiate from authentic postings. Furthermore, our findings suggest that traditional network and user interaction characteristics—that is, meta features—like the quantity of likes are not particularly useful for identifying clickbait. Even though service providers like Instagram might try to create and run a screening algorithm to weed out content like this, it will always be difficult to identify clickbait since clickbaiters will always find new, clever ways to avoid being filtered.

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