

## **CLICKBAIT CONTENT MAY NOT BE CLICK-WORTHY**

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Austin, TX – May 16, 2019 – In today’s highly competitive digital environment, it can be tempting to turn to clickbait news. The Center for Media Engagement [previously found](#) that using questions in political news headlines makes audiences less likely to engage. Our new study looks at another type of clickbait content: “outrage” news. Coverage of this type of news emphasizes outrageous behavior by political leaders and might include insults, obscenity, exaggeration, and extreme partisanship.

Our study found that there is little commercial benefit and mixed democratic benefit to this type of content. Results show:

- Outrage articles prompted perceptions of “fake news.”
- Outrage headlines decreased intended engagement.
- Readers recognized incivility in outrage news headlines and articles.
- Outrage headlines increased how much people learn from an article.

Turning to clickbait political coverage might not only fail to boost clicks and comments, but it could also harm the reputation of the news outlet. In fact, readers who saw outrage headlines were less likely to want to return to the news site. Says researcher Ashley Muddiman, “Our new study serves as another warning about the dangers of clickbait content. Newsrooms likely won’t get the engagement results they want and they could end up furthering the narrative of “fake news.”

To read more about the findings, access the full report on our website:

<https://mediaengagement.org/research/clickbait-content-may-not-be-click-worthy>

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*The Center for Media Engagement, part of the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, provides research-based techniques for engaging digital audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at [mediaengagement.org](https://mediaengagement.org).*