



NEWS OPINION SPORTS ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MULTIMEDIA ABOUT LAKE VOICE NEWS THE FEED



From cat pics to rapists: what clickbait really does

FEBRUARY 10, 2016 BY COLE WHITE

LEAVE A COMMENT

BY COLE WHITE | Opinion Editor |

Clickbait: the sensationalist, baiting online articles that trick you into visiting webpages with bold headlines. We love to complain about them as much as we love to click on them.

But clickbait can be more than dumb harmless fun. In regards to the proposed "[pro-rape](#)" rally that was originally scheduled here in Duluth on Saturday, Feb. 6, it can be something much darker.

To understand why clickbait can be dangerous, first you have to understand what its purpose is.

When you look at a site like BuzzFeed, the most notable perpetrator, you occasionally find they actually do good reporting. That substantial reporting is buried underneath lists like "[13 potatoes that look like Channing Tatum](#)" and mountains of [cat pictures](#).

Why? Because clickbait is what pays for that honest reporting.

Those stupid posts we click on are what creates revenue for websites. Media makes the money to sustain itself through sponsorship and advertising. The more views and shares they get, the more ad revenue they can draw in to focus on legitimate reporting.

News stories don't draw in page views like "[Are you a cake or a Drake](#)." We don't want to be informed, we want to be entertained, so articles like these are a necessary evil to keep media solvent.

But clickbait can be more than just cat pictures and listicles published for the sake of noble causes. It can also pad the wallets of appalling groups.

The past week people in the community were outraged when a group under the masthead Return of the Kings proposed to hold a neo-masculinity rally, particularly based on the group's stances [towards rape](#).

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when it was cancelled, but that relief may have been unfounded.

WELCOME!

The official site of the University of Minnesota Duluth student news. The Statesman is UMD's official student newspaper. LakeVoice features community news from Duluth. Both news organizations are run by students and open to the public.

Search this website ...

LAKE VOICE COMMUNITY NEWS



Follow up: Duluth's 5ks vs.

Grandma's Marathon

The business of going green: the Lincoln Park Shines project



A Kid's Club and parents' time out

[Lake Voice News](#)

YOUTUBE

I'll propose the idea to you that it was never going to happen to begin with.

Of all the people who were outraged, how many people clicked into it, looked through their page or shared their posts out of disgust? I know I did. I dug through their whole website to try and understand what they are.

There's one part of their page that struck me: an advertising section.

That's when I realized Return of the Kings is little more than the terrible extreme of clickbait. All those hate-shares and outraged pageviews offer Roosh Valizadeh, the founder of the site, more fodder for driving up the cost of sponsored content on his page. It doesn't matter whether you hate it, a click and a share is the same across the board. Staging a pro-rape rally? If there was an Academy Awards for clickbait, that would sweep every category.

We're accidentally feeding the beast we despised so much. That's why I haven't linked to any of their material. I know you'd click on it.

Valizadeh may be a sociopath who found a way to take advantage of sad, insecure men who think his books on picking up women will help them, but he's also found a way to make the people who hate him every bit as profitable.

That's the dark side of clickbait. We've made stupidity and terribleness far too lucrative. Can we really fix this? Probably not. It's worth keeping in mind when we're skimming our newsfeed.

Sorry that got depressing. To make up for it, here's ten hours of [keyboard cat](#). God bless the internet.

Share this:



Comments

comments

FILED UNDER: OPINION

TAGGED WITH: CLICKBAIT, COLE WHITE, INTERNET

“

LEAVE A REPLY

Enter your comment here...

Hidden Gems of Duluth: Co...



PODCAST: CHANCELLOR CHAT

Editor-in-Chief Nicole Brodzik sits down with Chancellor Black and asks questions from UMD students.



Chancellor Chat

SOUNDCLOUD

Gun Violence on C...



Cookie policy

Share this:



The Statesman



University of Minnesota Duluth's student newspaper



UPCOMING EVENTS

There are no upcoming events at this time.