

Article

AI vs. Human-Authored Headlines: Evaluating the Effectiveness, Trust, and Linguistic Features of ChatGPT-Generated Clickbait and Informative Headlines in Digital News

Vasile Gherheș^{1,*} , Marcela Alina Fărcașiu² , Mariana Cernicova-Buca¹  and Claudiu Coman³ 

¹ Interdisciplinary Research Center for Communication and Sustainability, Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Politehnica University of Timisoara, 300006 Timisoara, Romania; mariana.cernicova@upt.ro

² Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Politehnica University of Timisoara, 300006 Timisoara, Romania; marcela.farcasiu@upt.ro

³ Faculty of Sociology and Communication, Transilvania University of Brasov, 500036 Brașov, Romania; claudiu.coman@unitbv.ro

* Correspondence: vasile.gherhes@upt.ro

Abstract: This study explores possible applications of AI technology in online journalism, given the predictions that speed and adaptation to the new medium will increase the penetration of automation in the production business. The literature shows that while the human supervision of journalistic workflow is still considered vital, the journalistic workflow is changing in nature, with the writing of micro-content being entrusted to ChatGPT-3.5 among the most visible features. This research assesses readers' reactions to different headline styles as tested on a sample of 624 students from Timisoara, Romania, asked to evaluate the qualities of a mix of human-written vs. AI-generated headlines. The results show that AI-generated, informative headlines were perceived by more than half of the respondents as the most trustworthy and representative of the media content. Clickbait headlines, regardless of their source, were considered misleading and rated as manipulative (44.7%). In addition, 54.5% of respondents reported a decrease in trust regarding publications that frequently use clickbait techniques. A linguistic analysis was conducted to grasp the qualities of the headlines that triggered the registered responses. This study provides insights into the potential of AI-enabled tools to reshape headline writing practices in digital journalism.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; ChatGPT; clickbait; headline; audience; journalistic content; trust; linguistic analysis



Academic Editors: Jaime Caro, Cleo Sgouropoulou, Christos Troussas, Akrivi Krouska, Katerina Kabassi and Phivos Mylonas

Received: 24 January 2025

Revised: 7 February 2025

Accepted: 13 February 2025

Published: 18 February 2025

Citation: Gherheș, V.; Fărcașiu, M.A.; Cernicova-Buca, M.; Coman, C. AI vs. Human-Authored Headlines:

Evaluating the Effectiveness, Trust, and Linguistic Features of

ChatGPT-Generated Clickbait and Informative Headlines in Digital News. *Information* **2025**, *16*, 150.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/info16020150>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The spectacular development of artificial intelligence tools has accelerated automation penetration in a wide variety of socio-economic sectors, with a rather popular opinion being that the adoption of AI “is not a matter of choice but of timetable and strategy because all companies today must build AI capabilities into their businesses” [1,2]. The media industry could not remain indifferent to the phenomenon [3]. The debate over automated journalism and the possible influences of artificial intelligence on news generation and distribution occurs both in scientific research on the matter [4] and in the media dedicated to general readership [5], fueling reports from different organizations [6–9], calls to action [10], and/or monitoring of the practice [11]. The launch of ChatGPT in 2022 made the public aware of the availability of tools that could create content “like a pro” and put enormous

pressure on professionals whose competences in providing text, images, or music seemed to be challenged [12–14], as foretold by Tom Nichols, in his influential book *The Death of Expertise* [15]. Opinions about the value and reliability of AI-produced news range from skepticism and cautious reserved attitudes [16–18] to moderate optimism [19]. A vigorous trend in research is represented by scientists who compare AI-produced texts with human-authored ones [20–23] in terms of quality, credibility, reliability [24]. Another trend in research focuses on the implications of AI use on journalism and on the perspectives of the profession in the digital age [4,25].

The present research draws inspiration from the debate on the uses of ChatGPT in journalism. It focuses on the specific case of headlines as a subgenre that receives approximately five times more attention from consumers of media content than the articles they announce [26]. Also, as Develotte and Rechniewski highlighted, the impact of headlines on audiences is likely to be stronger than of the text of the news article, “because certain linguistic features of titles make them particularly memorable and effective” [27]. Despite the prominent position of headlines and their extensive reception (accidental or intentional) by consumers of media content, there is a gap in the research of these small-format texts regarding the features and functions of headlines [26,28,29], despite the fact that ChatGPT is tested to be adequate for headline production [30]. This research aims to contribute to narrowing this gap by focusing on the reaction of young audiences to headlines, their expectations and critical reception of news through the lenses created by headlines, and their attitude towards media outlets that opt for certain types of headlines. ChatGPT is used as a research tool in the sense that real-life, human-authored articles were proposed to this AI tool for creating two types of headlines, one in an informative style and one in a clickbait key. The research objectives of this study are designed to explore the impact of ChatGPT-generated headlines on media consumers, with a particular focus on the preferences, perceptions, and trust of young audiences in journalistic news and in media outlets.

This study aims to assess the extent to which ChatGPT-generated headlines, both in clickbait and informative styles, influence reader engagement and trust compared to human-authored headlines. Specifically, the research seeks to evaluate how different headline styles affect readers’ perceptions of media credibility, clarity, and honesty, with a focus on the long-term implications of frequent clickbait usage on trust in media outlets. In addition, the study aims to conduct a detailed linguistic and stylistic analysis of both clickbait and informative headlines to identify the major lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic features that contribute to their effectiveness. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the behavioral impact of different headline styles on readers, including how these styles influence decisions to click on and engage with news articles, as well as the likelihood of sharing content on social media. The research will assess whether readers associate clickbait headlines with low-quality content and how this perception affects their overall media consumption habits.

Participants in the research, students in Timisoara, the largest city in the western part of Romania, were invited to evaluate headline triplets—one human-authored, originating from real news pieces in Romanian media, and two ChatGPT-generated, for the same articles. AI was used in this research for one of the best-known and tested features it displays: that of summarizing larger texts into easy-to-read small formats [14,31,32]. In more detail, the authors of the present study set the following research objectives:

RO1: To evaluate the impact of ChatGPT-generated headlines (both clickbait and informative styles) on young media consumers’ preferences, perceptions, and trust, comparing their effectiveness in engagement, clarity, and credibility to human-authored headlines.

RO2: To investigate the behavioral impact of different headline styles on readers, including their influence on decisions to click, engage with, and share news content, as well as the extent to which clickbait headlines are associated with lower-quality content and affect overall media consumption habits.

RO3: To conduct a linguistic and stylistic analysis of clickbait and informative headlines, identifying the important lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic features that influence their effectiveness, and to assess how these features shape readers' perceptions of media credibility and honesty.

This research will be presented as follows: the theoretical basis for the linguistic analysis of the corpus of headlines, proposed for evaluation to the participants in the study, the research methodology and procedures, used for the collection of data, the results of the study in relation to the audience's reaction to the headlines in the corpus and the linguistic analysis of the preferred types of headlines, finally followed by the authors' conclusions on the results.

2. Literature Review

Being a linguistic, journalistic, and cultural phenomenon, the news headline has evolved with media technology and cultural contexts, transitioning from print to digital. However, of the core principles of defining the headlines, those of informing and persuading remain constant [26,29,33–36]. Martin Conboy [34] identifies three main functions of these small texts in the media, in a diachronic perspective: to provide a brief overview of the main text, to serve as indicators of the style and values of the news outlet, and to catch the attention of the media consumer. As Iarovici and Amel so precisely formulated [33], headlines are meant to be informing texts, simultaneously acting as signs for the body of article they announce and as signals eliciting responses from the readers. A consistent part of media linguistics is dedicated to unveiling the linguistic affordances used by the producers of media content to attract and retain the attention of ever-changing audiences.

The theoretical framework of language functions is essential for analyzing the differences between informative and persuasive headlines. It provides a structured foundation, highlighting key distinctions in their purposes and methods—informative communication focuses on clarity and objectivity, while persuasive communication aims to influence through emotional and rhetorical strategies. By grounding the study in established linguistic theories, such as Jakobson's communication model and Halliday's [37] representational function, the framework adds depth and credibility to the analysis. It also supports a systematic comparison of linguistic and stylistic features, ensuring a comprehensive and methodologically sound approach. Furthermore, the framework improves accessibility for readers by linking theory to practice and clarifying the rationale behind the analysis, making the findings both rigorous and relevant.

The Informative and Persuasive Functions of Language

Language functions are essential to human communication, shaping how we express ideas, emotions, and intentions. Among these, the informative and persuasive functions stand out for their unique roles and influence on discourse. Although both are integral to everyday interactions, they differ significantly in their objectives, methods, and effects.

The informative function is deeply connected to Roman Jakobson's communication model (1960) [38], which identifies six core elements of any communicative act: context, sender, receiver, message, contact, and code. Each element corresponds to a specific linguistic function, with the informative function aligning directly with the context or referent of the communication. This function focuses on the transmission of factual, objective information about the external world. In Jakobson's framework, context refers to the

situation, event, or subject that the message describes. The informative function is activated when communication prioritizes providing clarity about this context. In 1973, Michael Halliday [37] introduced his seven functions of language, which explain how children use language, referring to these as developmental functions or microfunctions. These include instrumental, personal, regulatory, interactional, imaginative, representational, and heuristic functions. Halliday's representational function, specifically, describes language's role in conveying facts, information, and ideas. It emphasizes describing the external world, sharing knowledge, and communicating propositions.

Beyond Jakobson and Halliday, other scholars have also explored the informative function of language, either directly or indirectly, through their work in linguistics, communication, and semiotics. For example, John Searle, in (1969) [39], analyzed the informative function through his classification of speech acts. Among these, assertives closely align with the informative function, as they involve statements that convey information or assert propositions as true. Similarly, Geoffrey Leech, in *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983) [40], examined the communicative aspects of language, including its informative role. Leech's treatment of the informative function is part of his broader framework on how speakers use language strategically to convey information, particularly in contexts that require cooperation and politeness. His emphasis on pragmatic principles, such as the Maxim of Quantity and the Politeness Principle, highlights how the informative function operates within effective and harmonious communication.

As regards the persuasive function of language, it has long been a subject of fascination for philosophers, linguists, and communication theorists, evolving over centuries to explore how words influence beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Roman Jakobson reimagined the functions of language in his seminal 1960 model, highlighting the conative function, which focuses on influencing or directing the listener's behavior. Jakobson pinpointed the linguistic mechanisms that drive action. The conative function manifests most clearly in imperatives and other forms of directive language—expressions designed to elicit a response.

The study of persuasion took another turn with John Searle's speech act theory, in which he explored the persuasive power of directives—statements designed to compel action. Commands, requests, and suggestions all fall under this category, highlighting how language operates not just descriptively but also performatively. Also, Leech's work emphasized the importance of politeness and cooperation in persuasion, showing how subtle adjustments in tone, form, and context can make persuasive efforts more effective and socially harmonious.

These foundational theories provide a critical basis for contemporary studies that further elaborate on how informative and persuasive language functions operate in modern contexts. For instance, O'Keefe [41] and Perloff [42] examine persuasion theory and its communicative strategies, highlighting the contrast between persuasive and informative discourse. Van Dijk [43] offers a socio-cognitive approach, analyzing how discourse structures shape knowledge dissemination and influence public perception. Crystal [44] explores the adaptability of language, particularly in the context of modern media, while Hagoort and Indefrey [45] provide a neurolinguistic perspective on how the brain processes different language functions. Together, these studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic, cognitive, and communicative dimensions of informative and persuasive language. By synthesizing these perspectives, this review establishes a foundation for analyzing how different language functions operate in media discourse, particularly in the distinction between informative and clickbait headlines.

According to van Dijk [46], the primary function of a headline is to provide a macrostructural summary of the text, capturing its main idea or topic. The headline

serves as a cognitive framework that helps readers anticipate the content and focus of the article. They guide the reader's attention and facilitate understanding by highlighting the most important aspects of the discourse.

Informative headlines are crafted to deliver the essence of a story in a concise and accessible manner, emphasizing clarity, relevance, and neutrality [47]. They are designed to be clear and direct, avoiding ambiguity to ensure readers quickly understand the subject matter [48]. To achieve this, they employ linguistic economy, often omitting articles or auxiliary words [26,46]. They are closely related to the article's content, summarizing its core message while maintaining accuracy and avoiding sensationalism, since neutrality and objectivity are key characteristics as serious journalism relies on impartial headlines to uphold credibility [49]. Additionally, these headlines frequently address the journalistic 5Ws and H—Who, What, When, Where Why, and How—providing essential context in a brief format [49,50].

Persuasive or clickbait headlines, on the other hand, are designed to grab attention, evoke strong emotions, and generate curiosity, making them effective in engagement, even if the actual content does not always live up to the promise of the headline. These types of headlines tend to prioritize getting the reader to click, often at the expense of clarity or information. In their case, the most common feature is the use of exaggerated language, creating a sense of urgency or intrigue that appeals to the reader's emotions or curiosity [22]. This tactic plays on the psychological principle of curiosity, which has been extensively explored by researchers such as Fogg [51] and Kate Scott [52], who discuss how persuasive design can change user behavior through emotional triggers and curiosity.

Furthermore, persuasive (clickbait) headlines often make use of personal pronouns or direct addresses, which creates a sense of direct communication with the reader [53]. These personalized elements help create an illusion of intimacy, drawing the reader in further. Ultimately, the pragmatic function of these headlines is to influence action, primarily, the act of clicking [52,54,55]. Emotional engagement is a powerful motivator for action; as Berger and Milkman [56] note, content that evokes high-arousal emotions is more likely to be shared.

In summary, while persuasive or clickbait headlines use emotional triggers, curiosity, and vagueness to attract attention, informative headlines aim to communicate facts in a clear and straightforward manner. Both types of headlines are effective in their own right, but they serve different purposes: one to entice and the other to inform.

This aligns with Tereszkievicz [57], who makes a useful comparison between print and online headings that could be seen as an analogy for the informative vs. persuasive (clickbait) headlines. She observes that readers favor "clear and informative headlines" over those that rely on stylistic devices or playful puns, as the latter often fail to convey the essence of the story [57]. She also mentions that shifts in the function and context of the headline can lead to additional changes influencing its structure, suggesting that print headlines tend to be more informative while the online ones are more persuasive and attention-grabbing. Similar conclusions were drawn in the analysis of headline types in the Western Balkans, carried out by Farid Selimi [58] and Na Yeon Lee [59], who compare South Korean news headlines with those used by The New York Times. The juxtaposition of informative and clickbait headlines inspired the key in which the researchers authoring the present study formulated questions regarding audience perceptions of the proposed sets of headlines.

3. Materials and Methods

To evaluate the impact of headlines on young audiences, a total of 100 articles were drawn from the RoCliCo database, which comprises 8313 headlines collected from six

media outlets. RoCliCo, developed by Broscoteanu and Ionescu [60], is the first Romanian corpus dedicated to analyzing clickbait headlines. For this study, only five media sources were included, as one of the outlets in RoCliCo did not meet the required format for statistical analysis. The selected Romanian online media platforms were Digi24 (TV station), Libertatea (newspaper), ProTV (TV station), WOWBiz (newspaper), and Viva (magazine). To ensure a balanced corpus, 20 articles with clickbait headlines were selected from each of these five sources.

The process of picking 20 headlines from each media source was guided by a clear and unbiased method. Firstly, only articles marked as clickbait were included in the selection pool. For each outlet, the total count of clickbait articles was divided by 20 to determine a fixed interval for choosing headlines. These headlines were then picked at regular intervals, ensuring an even and fair distribution across the dataset. This strategy ensured a balanced and representative sample of 20 clickbait headlines from each source, maintaining equal representation in the final corpus.

To further clarify the methodology and structure of the study, Figure 1 presents a schematic overview of the research design, highlighting the selection process, categorization of headlines, and the comparison framework between original and AI-generated variants.

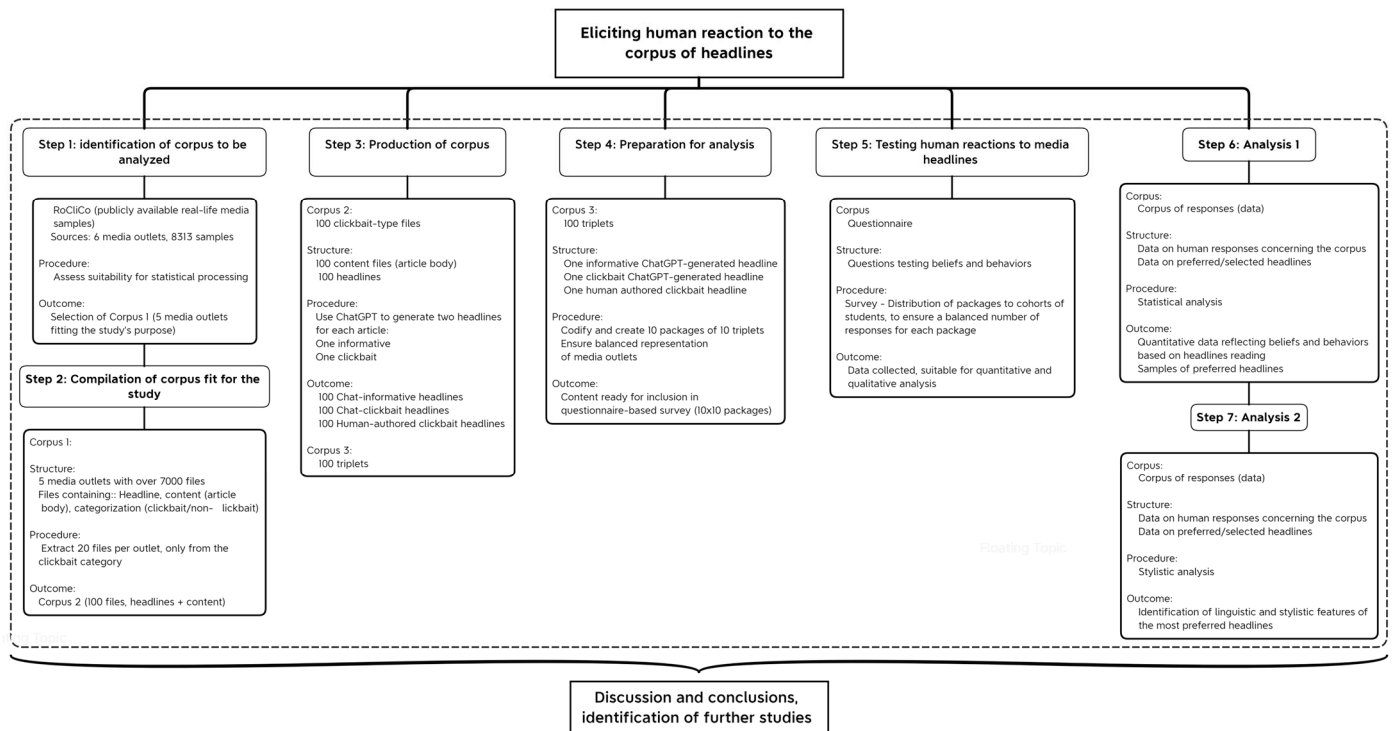


Figure 1. Research design (author generated).

The study compared original human-authored clickbait headlines with those generated by ChatGPT using the selected articles. For each of the 100 articles, ChatGPT-3.5 created two types of headlines: one designed to imitate the engaging and curiosity-driven style of clickbait, and another focusing on clarity and accuracy, presenting the article’s content in a neutral and factual manner. This allowed for a direct comparison between the original headlines and the AI-generated alternatives, highlighting the differences in tone and approach.

The two variants of headlines generated by ChatGPT-3.5 were based solely on the content of the articles, without access to the original headlines, which ensured independent and unbiased creation. Each article had three headlines: the original, a ChatGPT-generated clickbait version, and a ChatGPT-generated informative version. This produced a corpus of

100 headline triplets, enabling further research into how different headline styles influence reader perception. Respondents were asked to assess their preferences for headline types without knowing that two out of three variants were AI-generated, to avoid channeling the responses towards the machine vs. humans debate [16,17,23] instead of the focus of the research, looking for candid reactions to the texts at first sight.

3.1. Questionnaire

The study used a custom-designed questionnaire with ten variants to explore reading habits, headline perceptions, and preferences. The first section was identical across all versions, focusing on reading habits and headline appeal at a cognitive level. Also, respondents were invited to assess their anticipated reaction as media content consumers regarding their trust in media outlets that cultivate certain types of headlines (clickbait vs. informative) and their intention to continue their interaction with such media outlets or not. The second section evaluated respondents' attitudes towards instances of media content, in direct contact with headline texts. It included 10 sets of headline triplets (original, ChatGPT-generated clickbait, and ChatGPT-generated informative headlines). Participants rated one randomly assigned set of 10 headlines, ensuring balanced representation and minimizing bias. In total, 100 sets of headlines were evaluated.

A pretest involving 10 university students, separate from the main sample of 624 participants, was conducted to evaluate the clarity and validity of the questionnaire. Feedback from this group helped refine the tool to ensure it was clear and aligned with the study's objectives. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, calculated to assess internal consistency, yielded a value of 0.786, indicating strong reliability according to standard guidelines [61], as presented in Table 1. This confirmed that the 14 questionnaire items were interrelated and consistently measured the same construct [62,63].

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.786	14

The research team distributed the invitations, and participants completed the questionnaires through a dedicated online platform. Responses were gathered between 25 September and 20 October 2024.

The triplets of headlines were offered for interpretation without any indication regarding the authorship of the texts in the corpus to assess respondents' preferences. The order of headline types was randomly assigned to ensure that respondents would not mechanically select the response intuitively perceived as socially acceptable. Once the results were collected, the research team codified the responses according to the appropriate category of headlines: human-authored original headlines, AI-generated clickbait headlines, and AI-generated informative headlines.

3.2. Sample

The study triggered responses from 624 university students aged 18–24 from Timișoara, Romania, representing young online media consumers. Participation was voluntary, with no incentives, and respondents were informed about the study's purpose, assured confidentiality, and allowed to withdraw at any time. Students used mobile devices to complete the questionnaire (phones and tablets). Data were anonymized and analyzed using statistical methods to assess the impact of headlines on reading behavior. The sample had a margin of error of $\pm 4\%$.

3.3. Linguistic Affordances

The preferred types of headlines (which received the largest number of positive appreciations) were further investigated from the point of view of their linguistic affordances. Lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic features are highlighted, with examples from the corpus. To facilitate international reception of the texts, English versions of the headlines are provided, but the corpus and the questionnaire were created in Romanian.

4. Results

The results show that the ChatGPT-generated headline proved to be the most attractive, with 37.5% of preferences displayed by the respondents in the sample, followed by the ChatGPT-generated informative headline, with 33.3% (Figure 2). The original headline of the article ranked last, in third place, obtaining only 29.2% of the responses. Cumulatively, ChatGPT-generated headlines (clickbait and informative) attracted 70.8% of the votes, suggesting that they have a greater impact on enticing interest than the original (human-authored) headlines. The percentage recorded by the original headlines indicates that they are less effective in enticing the audience's curiosity.

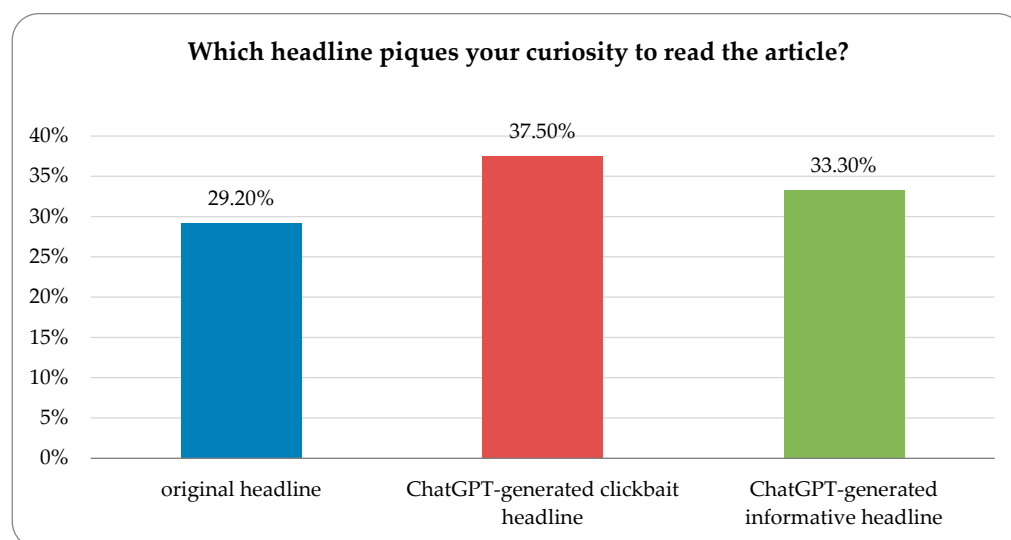


Figure 2. Preference for headlines that entice curiosity.

Responses to the question “Which headline do you think best reflects the content of the article, even if you haven’t read the article?” indicate that audiences, while frequently exposed to clickbait headlines, tend to reject this strategy by comparison to clearer and more informative alternatives. The ChatGPT-generated informative headline was chosen by 50.9% of the respondents as the most representative of the article’s content (Figure 3).

The original clickbait headline was preferred by only 28.5% of the respondents and the clickbait headline generated by ChatGPT was chosen by 20.6% of the respondents, being the one that recorded the lowest score. Closely related to the above results are also those recorded in response to the question “Which of these headlines do you think is misleading?”. The results confirm the idea that informative and clear headlines are better received by the public and are perceived as more trustworthy and accurate (Figure 4). The recorded percentages indicate the readers’ aversion to clickbait headlines, generated either by human writers or by artificial intelligence. The clickbait headline generated by ChatGPT was perceived as the most misleading, with 44.7% of the respondents identifying it as such. The original headline of the article, which was also of the clickbait type, was considered misleading by 32% of the respondents. Although less commonly perceived as misleading than clickbait headlines generated by ChatGPT, this result still reflects a

problem for current journalistic practice, especially for media sources that depend on such strategies to attract readers. The ChatGPT-generated informative headline was perceived as the least misleading, with only 23.3% of respondents considering it as such.

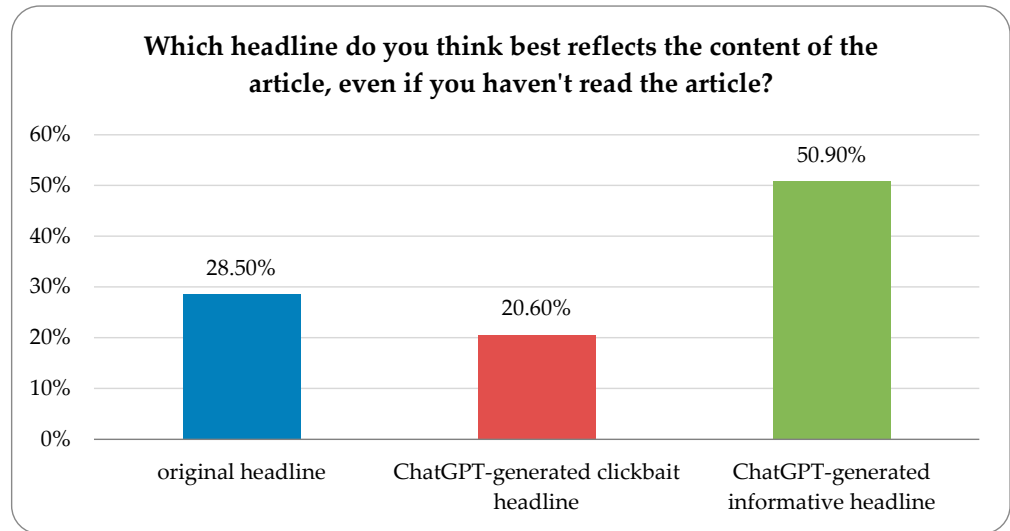


Figure 3. Perception of the headlines that best reflect the content of the article.

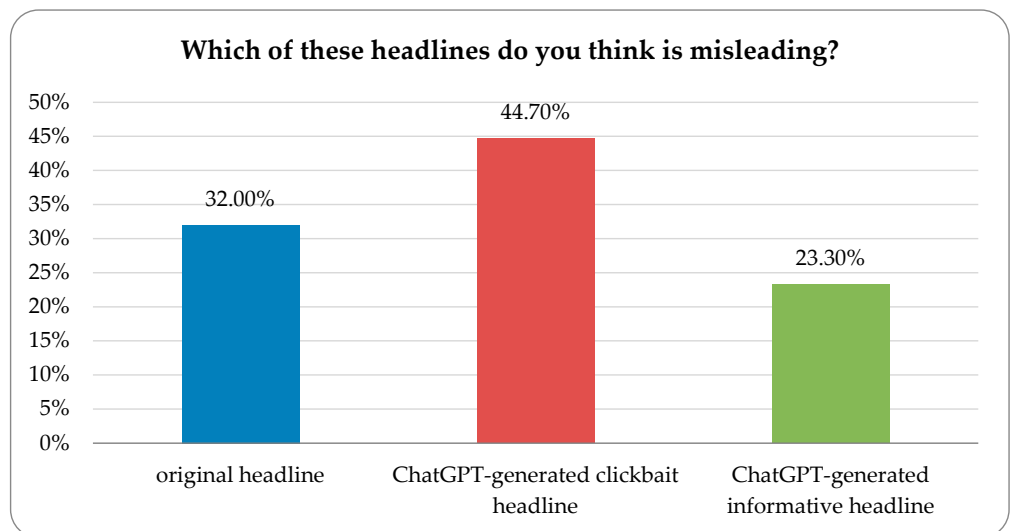


Figure 4. Perception of the headlines considered as misleading.

To the question “Which article would you read based on the headline?” the largest share of responses is represented by the category of those who chose the answer option “ChatGPT-generated informative headline”, which was preferred by 40.5% of the respondents (Figure 5). The “ChatGPT-generated clickbait headline” was chosen by 30.1% of the respondents, indicating a moderate attraction to this type of headline. The original headline of the article, also of the clickbait type, was preferred by 29.4% of the respondents, a result that is remarkably close to that of clickbait headlines generated by ChatGPT. Such a result suggests that the clickbait style, regardless of its source, has a similar effect in attracting audiences. However, it is less effective than a well-formulated informative headline.

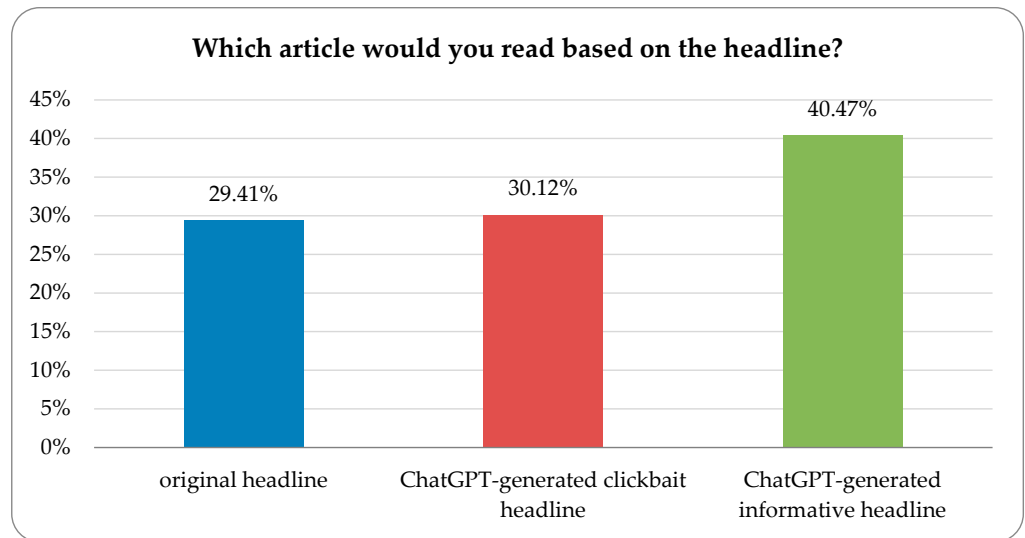


Figure 5. Preferences for reading articles based on headlines.

It seems that adopting an informative style not only supports the understanding of the content but also strengthens the relationship of trust between readers and media sources. The results recorded in the group of responses to the question “Which headline is the clearest and easiest to understand?” show a clear public preference for informative headlines. Such headlines are considered clearer and easier to understand. The ChatGPT-generated informative headline is perceived as the clearest and easiest to understand, being preferred by 48.7% of the respondents (Figure 6). This result suggests that headlines constructed in an informative style, avoiding ambiguity and sensationalist language, are the most valued by readers for clarity. The original clickbait headline of the article was considered clear and understandable by 28.8% of respondents, and the ChatGPT-generated clickbait headline was considered clear only by 22.4% of respondents, placing it last.

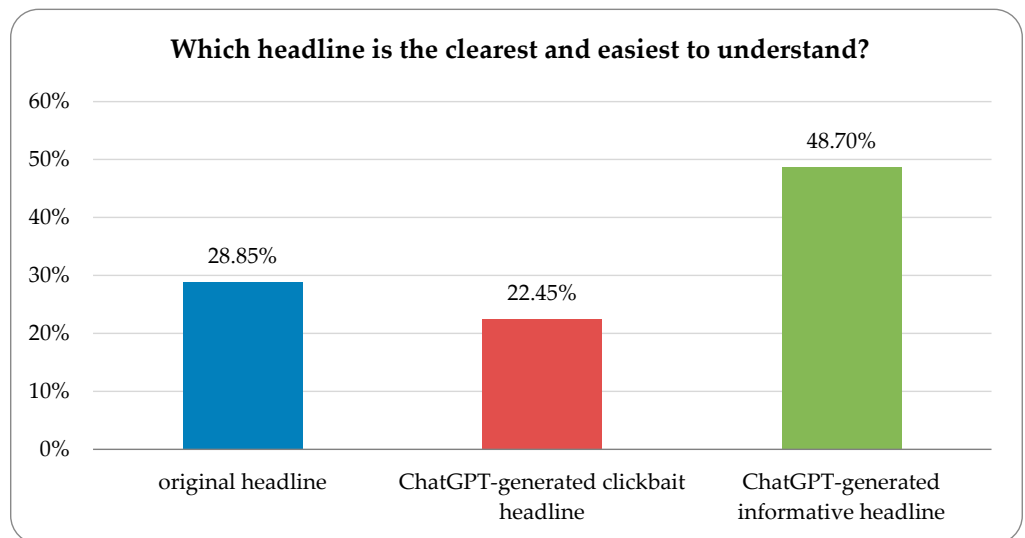


Figure 6. Perception of the clarity and ease of understanding of headlines.

Another aspect pursued by this research, and which emphasizes the differences between the analyzed types of headlines, was to capture the readers’ perceptions concerning the honesty of the headlines. Thus, ChatGPT-generated informative headlines are considered honest by more than half of the respondents (51.8%). This result (Figure 7) confirms that readers associate honesty with headlines that provide an objective and transparent

description of the content, without resorting to sensationalist or manipulative techniques. The category of original article headlines, clickbait, was considered honest by 28.4% of respondents, followed by ChatGPT-generated clickbait headlines, which were perceived as the least honest, with only 19.8% of the respondents identifying them as such. This suggests that while ChatGPT may be capable of replicating the clickbait style, readers still detect the insincerity associated with this type of headline.

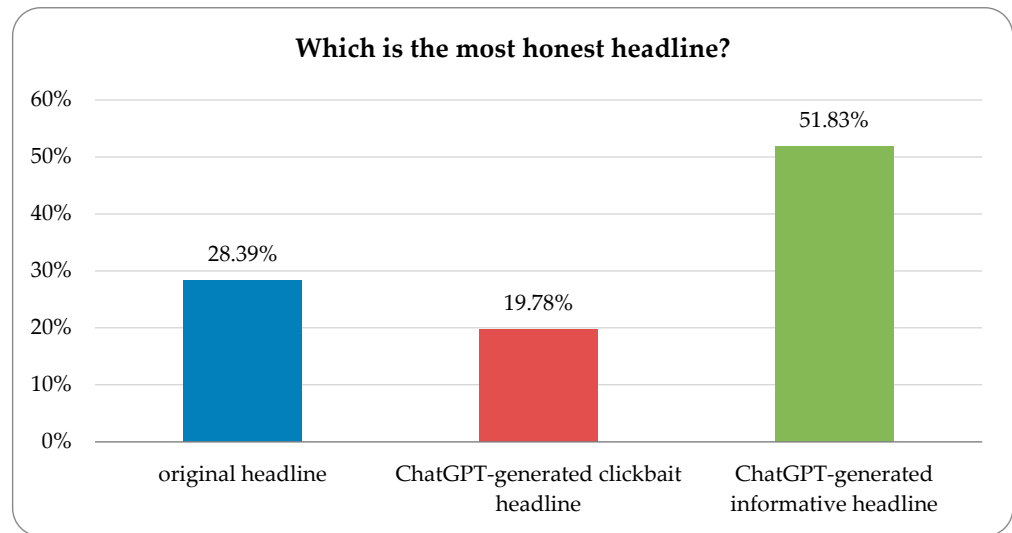


Figure 7. Respondents’ perception of the honesty of headlines.

Another aspect investigated by the research team was the impact of clickbait headlines on readers’ trust in publications, based on the encountered types of headlines. The results highlight a clear trend: the majority of readers value honesty and transparency in the writing of headlines and perceive clickbait as a threat to the credibility of media outlets (Figure 8). A significant majority (54.5%) of the respondents declared that their trust in the publication would be affected “a lot”, to the point that they would no longer trust a publication that abuses clickbait techniques. A third of the sample (31.3% respondents) assessed that their confidence would decrease “a little” in case clickbait headlines abound in a publication. Only a small percentage (8.5%) said frequent clickbait use would not affect their trust, while 5.7% of the respondents said they were not interested in whether a publication uses such headlines.

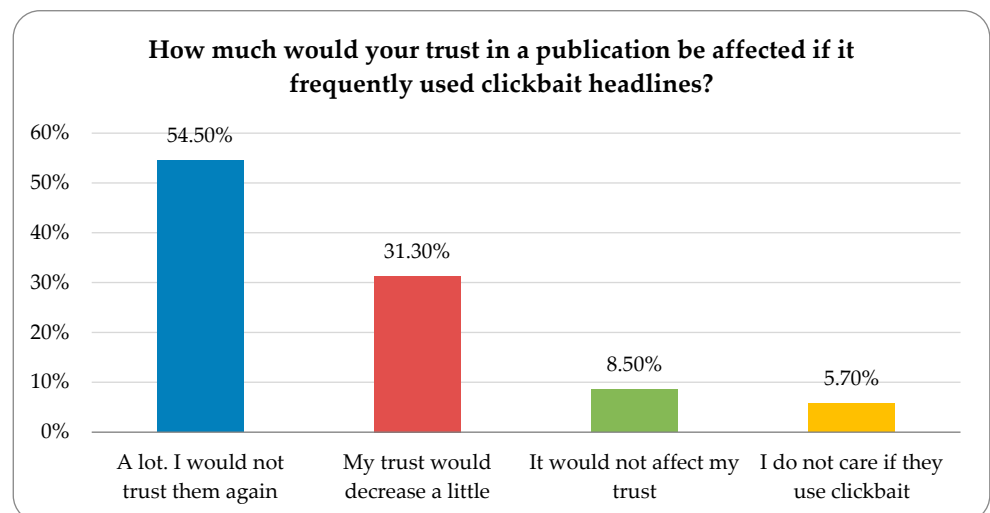


Figure 8. The impact of clickbait headlines on readers’ trust in publications.

Another objective of this study was to explore readers’ behavior and preferences when faced with different styles of headlines. Most respondents seem to show a preference for informative headlines, given that only a minority declare a high frequency of choosing clickbait headlines (Figure 9). When asked “How often do you choose to read an article with a clickbait headline instead of one with an informative headline?”, most respondents indicated that they choose articles with clickbait headlines only “occasionally” (34.4%) or “rarely” (27.9%). A smaller percentage of respondents, 16.8%, said they choose clickbait headlines “often”, while only 8.2 percent say they do so “very often”. This category represents a segment loyal to clickbait, but is relatively minor compared to those who frequently avoid this type of headline. On the other hand, 12.7% of the respondents indicated that they never read articles with clickbait headlines, indicating a decisive rejection of this editorial practice.

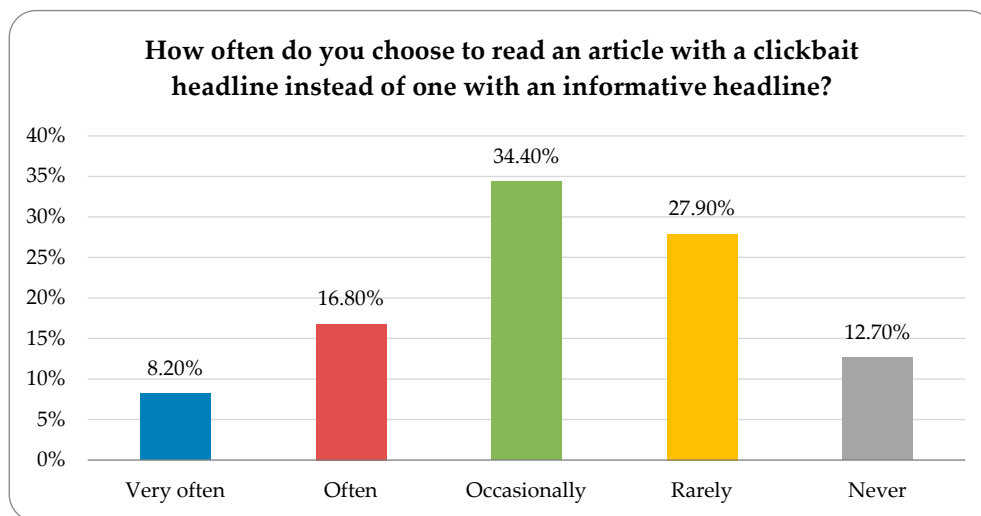


Figure 9. Readers’ preferences between clickbait and informative headlines.

This study also investigated whether readers associate clickbait headlines with lower-quality content compared to articles with informative headlines. The results of the analysis on the perception of the quality of articles with clickbait headlines suggest a predominantly negative opinion from respondents, with 43% of respondents believing that articles with clickbait headlines “usually” offer lower-quality content (Figure 10). Another significant segment, 40.1%, admits that “sometimes” articles with clickbait headlines can have quality content, but not always. This nuance shows that although the general perception of clickbait is negative, there are situations in which readers feel that the headlines do not necessarily reflect the poor quality of the content.

Only 9.6% of respondents believe that articles with clickbait headlines have the same quality as those with informative headlines, suggesting that there is a small number of readers who do not perceive a significant difference between the two types of editorial approach. Additionally, 7.3% of respondents said they do not know or have an opinion on the matter, which may indicate a lack of interest or experience with this type of content.

The study also set out to examine the likelihood that, in the future, readers will avoid publications that frequently use clickbait headlines. The results of the analysis on the likelihood that they will avoid publications that frequently use clickbait headlines highlight a general tendency toward avoiding these sources, with 30.6% of the respondents believing that they are “very likely” to avoid such a publication, and 29.3% stating that they are “likely” (Figure 11). These two categories together represent 60% of the respondents, which indicates a clear attitude of rejection towards publications that frequently resort to clickbait.

Another significant segment, 25.9%, remained “neutral” in this regard, which suggests that these respondents are not influenced by the clickbait headlines, at least in terms of the decision to avoid publication. Only a small percentage, 9.7%, consider that it is “unlikely” to avoid publications that use such headlines, and 4.5% say that it is “very unlikely” to make such a decision.

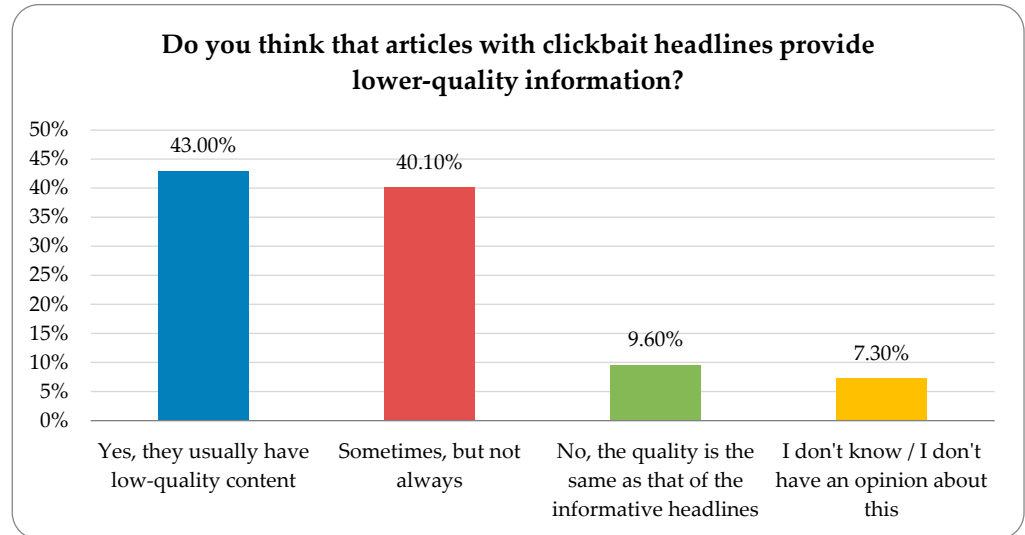


Figure 10. Perception of the quality of the content associated with clickbait headlines.

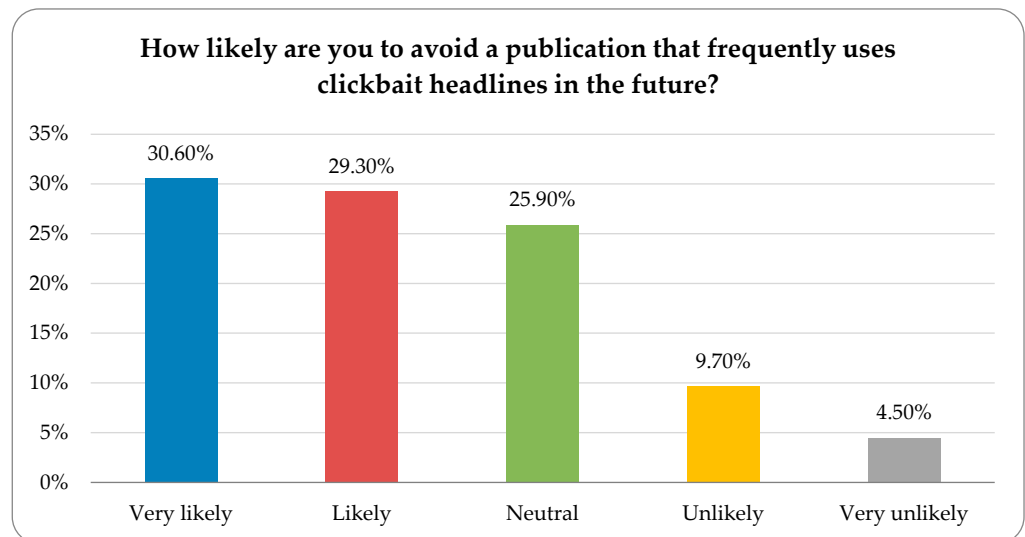


Figure 11. The likelihood of avoiding publications that frequently use clickbait headlines.

4.1. Linguistic and Stylistic Analysis

Given that respondents frequently favored informative headlines over clickbait-generated ones in several instances (see Figures 3, 5 and 6), a linguistic and stylistic analysis was conducted on a sample of both types to uncover what makes informative headlines clearer and easier to understand. In particular, 40.70% of respondents identified informative headlines as such (Figure 6). The findings suggest that the clarity and comprehensibility of informative headlines stem from fundamental linguistic distinctions at the lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels.

The distinction between the informative and persuasive functions of language lies in their goals and methods. Informative communication emphasizes clarity and objectivity, with the aim of conveying facts. In contrast, persuasive communication seeks to influence,

often using emotional and rhetorical tactics to achieve its objectives. Recognizing these differences is essential for effective communication, as it allows speakers and writers to adapt their approach to suit their audience and purpose. Therefore, these distinctions can serve as valuable tools for journalists and content writers, helping them achieve the desired impact on their audience.

4.1.1. Informative vs. Persuasive Headlines

In what follows, a detailed linguistic and stylistic analysis of the sample of informative and clickbait-generated (persuasive) headings will be provided. Given the distinction between the informative and persuasive functions of language, these terms will continue to be used in relation to the headlines in the analysis.

4.1.2. Lexical Level

At the lexical level, informative headlines stand out for their clarity and precision, as they employ a neutral and precise language that conveys the subject matter directly. For example, headlines such as “Bugetarii din România câștigă cu 30% mai mult decât angajații din privat: diferențe semnificative în salarii și beneficia” [“Public sector employees in Romania are paid 30% more than those in the private sector: significant differences in salaries and benefits”] or “Guvernul a adoptat noile legi ale educației: salarizarea profesorilor va fi reglementată de Legea salarizării” [“The government has adopted the new education laws: teachers’ salaries will be regulated by the Remuneration Law”] use exact terms that eliminate ambiguity and allow the reader to grasp the context immediately. Specific and neutral terms such as “public sector employees”, “private sector employees”, “salaries and benefits” directly describe the subject matter without ambiguity or emotional coloring. Lexical precision is also present in the percentage “30%”, which conveys exact information and avoids vague descriptors.

In contrast, persuasive (clickbait) headlines often rely on emotionally charged and hyperbolic terms that prioritize impact over clarity. Words such as “șocant” (shocking) or “lovitură (blow) are frequently used, as seen in the following headlines: “Șocant! Salariile bugetarilor explodează cu 30% peste mediul privat! Sporuri și beneficii la care angajații privați nici nu visează!” [“Shocking! Public sector salaries explode by 30% more than in the private sector! Increases and benefits that private sector employees do not even dream of!”] and “Lovitură pentru profesori! Guvernul adoptă noile legi ale educației fără capitolul privind salariile!” [“Blow for teachers! The government passes new education laws without provisions for salaries!”]. While these choices grab attention, they can obscure the essential content, making it more challenging for the reader to discern the actual information. This lexical strategy, aimed at evoking strong emotions, often comes at the expense of immediate comprehension.

4.1.3. Syntactic Level

At the syntactic level, the contrast in clarity between informative and persuasive headlines is quite noticeable. Informative headlines use clear, well-structured sentences that adhere to standard grammatical rules. They present ideas in a logical sequence, generally following the subject–predicate–complement order. For instance, in the headline “România și Bulgaria respinse pentru aderarea la Schengen: detalii despre votul Olandei și Austriei” [“Romania and Bulgaria rejected for Schengen accession: details about the vote of the Netherlands and Austria”], the structure is straightforward. It begins with the main subject (Romania and Bulgaria), followed by the predicate (rejected), and ends with specific details about the circumstances (details about the vote of the Netherlands and Austria). This logical arrangement allows the reader to quickly grasp the “who”, “what” and “why” of the situation.

Alternatively, persuasive headlines often use fragmented or elliptical structures to grab attention, not using the logical structure of the informative headlines. These headlines omit key grammatical components such as the subject or predicate, creating a sense of urgency or drama. The headline “Trădare șocantă! Bulgaria blochează intrarea României în Schengen cu un gest surprinzător!” [“Shocking betrayal! Bulgaria blocks Romania’s Schengen accession with a surprising gesture”] is crafted to grab attention through emotional and sensational elements. Its structure deviates from the characteristics of an informative headline in several ways. The opening exclamation “Shocking betrayal!” immediately appeals to the reader’s emotions, using an adjective (shocking) to heighten the dramatic effect and a loaded noun (betrayal) to create a sense of urgency and outrage. The main clause “Bulgaria blocks Romania’s Schengen accession” introduces the core event with a simple subject–predicate–complement structure. While this provides some factual basis, the sentence lacks additional context or details, leaving readers with unanswered questions. Informative headlines typically aim to clarify the “why” or “how” of an event, ensuring that the essential details are readily available. The prepositional phrase “with a surprising gesture” presents a vagueness that creates intrigue but offers no concrete explanation, forcing the reader to click for more information. Informative headlines would specify the gesture or provide additional context to avoid ambiguity.

This difference in syntax highlights the priorities of each type of headline: informative headlines aim to deliver information efficiently, whereas persuasive ones seek to evoke an emotional response, often compromising clarity.

4.1.4. Semantic Level

Semantic clarity is a key feature of informative headlines, where the relationships between words are clearly defined, enabling readers to quickly identify the subject and context being discussed. For example, in the headline “Președintele CJ Constanța, Mihai Lupu, își cere scuze după ce a fost surprins jignind și amenințând un polițist local” [“The President of Constanța County Council, Mihai Lupu, apologizes after being caught insulting a local police officer], each word directly contributes to understanding the situation without ambiguities or elements that divert attention. The lack of metaphors or ambiguous expressions allows for the swift and effective conveyance of essential information.

Conversely, persuasive headlines favor semantic ambiguity, often suggesting multiple possibilities without providing immediate clarity. This is exemplified by the headline “Scandal șocant! Președintele CJ Constanța jignește și amenință un polițist: ‘Nu o să mai fii nimic săptămâna viitoare!’” [“Shocking scandal! The President of Constanța County Council insults and threatens a police officer: ‘You won’t be anything next week!’”]. The phrase “Shocking scandal!” sets the tone through its emotional and sensational language. The adjective “shocking” intensifies the perceived seriousness of the situation, while the noun “scandal” implies public indignation. The precise mention of “the President of Constanța County Council” enhances the headline’s impact by referencing a figure of authority. Naming a prominent individual signals the importance of the event, making it appear more significant to the audience. While the informative headline has also identified this key figure, it refrained from dramatizing his role or actions. The verbs “insults” and “threatens” are particularly strong, carrying inherently negative connotations. These words not only describe the actions but also frame him as morally reprehensible, encouraging readers to form an immediate judgment. The inclusion of the direct quote, “You won’t be anything next week!”, further amplifies the headline’s persuasive nature. This choice adds a personal, confrontational element to the story, drawing the reader into the tension of the exchange. However, the quote is presented without any surrounding context, leaving readers with unanswered questions. The informative headline above, on the other hand,

summarizes the idea by using the verb “apologizes” rather than including direct quotes, as the latter can often lead to misinterpretation or an incomplete understanding of the event.

4.1.5. Stylistic Level

Stylistically, informative headlines are marked by an impartial and neutral tone. They use a simple and measured style, purposefully avoiding exaggeration or emotional undertones. As an example, in the headline “Un utilizator TikTok pretinde că a prezis victoria Angliei împotriva Franței în sferturile de finală ale Cupei Mondiale” [“A TikTok user claims to have predicted England’s victory against France in the World Cup quarterfinals”], the tone is neutral and factual, avoiding emotionally charged or sensational language. The phrase “claims to have predicted” introduces a cautious stance, signaling that the claim is unverified without dismissing it outright, fostering an impression of journalistic impartiality. The lack of adjectives or exclamatory phrases maintains a reserved style.

By comparison, persuasive headlines adopt a dramatic and emotionally charged tone. Their style is often exaggerated, even bombastic, with the explicit goal of evoking a strong emotional response. The headline “Șocant! ‘Călătorul în timp’ știe deja cine va câștiga meciul Anglia—Franța! Pariurile sunt în joc!” [“Shocking! ‘The time traveler’ already knows who will win the England-France match! Bets are on the line!”] uses emotionally charged language, starting with “Shocking!”, an exclamation designed to immediately capture attention. The use of exclamatory punctuation amplifies the dramatic effect, setting a tone of urgency and intrigue.

In conclusion, the analysis highlights that the superior clarity and comprehensibility of informative headlines arise from their adherence to objective linguistic principles at multiple levels—lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic. By prioritizing precision, neutrality, and structured communication, these headlines effectively convey information without ambiguity or distraction. On the other hand, persuasive headlines, while attention-grabbing and emotionally engaging, frequently compromise clarity to achieve their goal of reader engagement. Recognizing these differences is crucial for both creators and consumers of content, as it underscores the importance of aligning language use with the intended communicative purpose, whether to inform or persuade.

5. Discussion

Headlines are the first contact of media consumers with the journalistic product, acting both as signs for the content and signals meant to elicit receivers’ reactions. As such, they are expected to entice readers’ attention through lexical and stylistic features, luring audiences to remain in the company of journalistic texts.

This study aimed to explore how AI-generated headlines (both clickbait and informative) compare to human-authored headlines in terms of reader engagement, trust, and perception. The hypothesis was that AI tools could produce headlines that are not only competitive but potentially superior in clarity, accuracy, and effectiveness compared to human-written ones. Although the results indicate a preference for informative headlines instead of clickbait, the role of AI lies in its ability to consistently generate high-quality, trustworthy headlines that can improve journalistic practices.

The presented research focused on headlines both from the point of view of their reception by the intended reader and from the point of view of effective use of linguistic affordances for Romanian, a language that is less represented in the research on journalistic practices and the applicability of artificial intelligence tools for language-related purposes.

The results obtained in this research contradict those of Graefe et al. [24], which state that news consumers appreciate human-written content more than computer-written content, at least in the case of headlines. If readers are not warned about the authorship

of the encountered texts, they formulate judgements based solely on the features of the content itself. On that point, the findings in this research converge with those formulated by Georgiou, in that AI-generated content, due to the development of the automated tools, is increasingly more indistinguishable from human-produced text [21].

The linguistic features of the tested headlines, the grammatical correctness, and the nuanced approach, made the ChatGPT-generated headlines more attractive to readers than the original, human-authored ones. A possible explanation for this performance is that AI has a long-standing history of summarizing texts. Therefore, headlines represent only a particular instance in this type of application [31]. Due to the fact that headlines do not produce texts from scratch, but extract information from larger texts, and in this case media content, the risks identified by Gutiérrez-Caneda and colleagues [30] can be reduced. It can be anticipated that ChatGPT will make its way into the newsrooms, improving the quality and effectiveness of journalistic work at least for headline production, as Pavlik discusses in his influential article "Collaborating With ChatGPT: Considering the Implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Journalism and Media Education" [12].

Participants in the study demonstrated a preference for informative headlines over clickbait ones, associating the latter with low quality content, as stated in scientific research [55]. This expectation can lead, further, to media consumers avoiding media outlets that make extensive use of clickbait, inducing a counteraction of the trends that initially contaminated even quality media in journalistic practices [29,35,36,58].

The preference for informative headlines over clickbait also has significant implications for the media industry. Scientific research has repeatedly shown that clickbait strategies erode trust in news organizations and drive audiences away from sources that rely on sensationalism. The findings of this study reinforce this perspective, suggesting that news outlets may need to reevaluate their reliance on clickbait and pivot towards transparency and informativeness to maintain reader trust. Over time, such shifts could counteract the trend of sensationalism that has permeated even quality journalism, as previously noted in media studies.

This study underscores the growing role of AI in journalistic practices, particularly in the realm of headline generation. AI-generated headlines have demonstrated their potential to outperform human-authored ones in clarity, engagement, and grammatical precision. As AI tools continue to evolve, their integration into journalism has the potential to enhance content quality, streamline editorial processes, and promote ethical media consumption. However, the ethical and editorial implications of AI-driven journalism warrant further exploration to ensure that automation serves as a tool for enhancing, rather than undermining, journalistic integrity.

6. Conclusions

This study explored the impact of headlines on readers' preferences, perceptions, and trust by comparing human-authored clickbait headlines with ChatGPT-generated headlines (both clickbait and informative). The use of AI tools in this investigation was not merely to replicate human-generated headlines, but to assess whether AI could produce headlines that are competitive or even superior in clarity, accuracy, and engagement.

The results provide valuable insights into the influence headline styles have over reader behavior and attitudes, particularly among young online media consumers. First, it was observed that ChatGPT-generated headlines, regardless of style, were considered more engaging than human-authored clickbait headlines. This suggests that artificial intelligence can provide effective alternatives for capturing the audience's attention, even when replicating the clickbait style. However, ChatGPT-generated informative headlines

were perceived as the clearest, most precise, and most representative of the articles' content, highlighting the importance of transparency and accuracy in headline writing.

On the other hand, clickbait headlines, both human-authored and ChatGPT-generated, were associated with a lack of trust and a negative perception of the content quality. Readers have considered these headlines to be misleading and expressed a clear preference for informative headlines, which provide an objective and neutral description of the topic. This trend aligns with the growing public awareness of clickbait practices and their desire to consume credible and high-quality content. Furthermore, the study has also highlighted the fact that the frequent use of clickbait headlines can undermine readers' trust in publications, with an overwhelming majority of respondents stating that they would avoid sources that overuse such practices.

The linguistic and stylistic examination of headlines has revealed major distinctions between informative and clickbait headlines. Informative headlines employ neutral language, straightforward syntax, and precise semantics, ensuring the message is quickly and clearly understood. Conversely, clickbait headlines leverage emotional language, fragmented structures, and semantic ambiguity to spark curiosity and entice clicks. Although these strategies are effective in grabbing attention, they often sacrifice clarity and accuracy, which can result in a negative perception of the content and the media outlet.

Regarding the practical applicability of this analysis, current and future professionals in the field should be taught to combine the best aspects of clickbait and informative headlines. By understanding audience preferences, linguistic nuances, and ethical considerations, they can create headlines that not only attract readers but also maintain trust and credibility, outperforming the content generated by artificial intelligence. They should engage in practical exercises where they can compare and contrast AI-generated headlines with their own creations. This hands-on approach will help them develop the skills needed to craft headlines that are both engaging and informative, making them more competitive in a media landscape increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence.

For instance, journalists can leverage ChatGPT to generate preliminary headline drafts, which they can then refine to enhance both engagement and journalistic integrity. This approach not only streamlines the writing process but also enables them to concentrate on the creative and analytical dimensions of their work, ensuring that headlines are both compelling and relevant. In this way, artificial intelligence serves as a valuable aid, supporting rather than replacing journalists.

These findings also inform journalistic standards and ethical considerations in headline creation. Ethical journalism requires balancing the need for audience engagement with the responsibility to provide accurate, unbiased information. By adhering to linguistic principles at lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels, journalists can craft headlines that prioritize transparency and objectivity. Although AI can provide significant benefits in terms of efficiency and reader engagement, it is important that AI-generated headlines are neither misleading nor factually inaccurate.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of striking a balance between capturing attention and maintaining credibility in headline writing. Informative headlines, which focus on clarity and accuracy, are not only favored by readers but also help build trust in media sources. Conversely, clickbait headlines, though effective in the short term, risk undermining public trust and harming the long-term reputation of publications. As a result, the media should embrace practices that blend attention-grabbing techniques with responsibility and transparency to cater for the needs of an increasingly discerning and informed audience.

Limitations and Further Research

Despite these relevant findings, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. The sample, consisting exclusively of university students from Timișoara, may limit the generalizability of the results to other demographic or cultural groups. Additionally, the selection of articles from the RoCliCo database and the exclusive focus on clickbait and informative headlines may exclude other headline styles that could be relevant for a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the use of ChatGPT for generating headlines, while providing interesting insights, may be influenced by the limitations of the language model in understanding cultural and contextual nuances. While this study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of young audiences regarding AI-generated headlines, future research should seek to include a more diverse sample population, involving different age groups, educational backgrounds, and geographic regions, in order to enhance the generalizability of the findings. It would also be useful to explore the long-term impact of exposure to different headline styles and to include other types of headlines in order to provide a broader perspective on reader preferences. Additionally, mixed methods, combining online studies with real-world experiments, could offer a deeper understanding of reader behavior. Future research could extend this work by incorporating methods to quantify emotional intensity and diversity in clickbait headlines. Last, but not least, the analysis could go deeper by asking participants to check their perception of the quality of headlines with the news content these headlines represent, thus exploring new dimensions of the quality of headlines, irrespective of the authorship of these small-format texts.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; formal analysis, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; investigation, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; methodology, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; software, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; supervision, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; visualization, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; writing—original draft, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C.; writing—review and editing, V.G., M.A.F., M.C.-B. and C.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Chan-Olmsted, S.M. A Review of Artificial Intelligence Adoptions in the Media Industry. *Int. J. Media Manag.* **2019**, *21*, 193–215. [CrossRef]
2. de-Lima-Santos, M.-F.; Ceron, W. Artificial Intelligence in News Media: Current Perceptions and Future Outlook. *Journal. Media* **2022**, *3*, 13–26. [CrossRef]
3. Artificial Intelligence in Journalism. Available online: <https://innovating.news/article/ai-in-journalism/> (accessed on 24 January 2025).
4. Amponsah, P.N.; Atianashie, A.M. Navigating the New Frontier: A Comprehensive Review of AI in Journalism. *Adv. J. Commun.* **2024**, *12*, 1–17. [CrossRef]
5. Granados, N. How Artificial Intelligence Is Shaping the New Media and Entertainment Economy. Available online: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nelsongranados/2024/05/31/how-artificial-intelligence-is-shaping-the-new-media-and-entertainment-economy/> (accessed on 23 January 2025).
6. Staff, W.-I. WAN-IFRA Publishes 5th Report on AI. Available online: <https://wan-ifra.org/2024/05/wan-ifra-publishes-5th-report-on-ai/> (accessed on 23 January 2025).
7. AI in Journalism | IBM. Available online: <https://www.ibm.com/think/insights/ai-in-journalism> (accessed on 23 January 2025).

8. OECD Artificial Intelligence Papers. Available online: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-artificial-intelligence-papers_dee339a8-en.html (accessed on 23 January 2025).
9. AI and the Future of Journalism: An Issue Brief for Stakeholders—UNESCO Digital Library. Available online: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391214> (accessed on 23 January 2025).
10. Media Development and AI: A Call to Action. Available online: <https://akademie.dw.com/en/media-development-and-artificial-intelligence-a-call-to-action/a-67321563> (accessed on 23 January 2025).
11. AI and the Future of News | Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available online: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/ai-journalism-future-news> (accessed on 23 January 2025).
12. Pavlik, J.V. Collaborating With ChatGPT: Considering the Implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Journalism and Media Education. *Journal. Mass Commun. Educ.* **2023**, *78*, 84–93. [CrossRef]
13. Olsen, G.R. Enthusiasm and Alienation: How Implementing Automated Journalism Affects the Work Meaningfulness of Three Newsroom Groups. *Journal. Pract.* **2023**, *19*, 304–320. [CrossRef]
14. van Dalen, A. Revisiting the Algorithms Behind the Headlines. How Journalists Respond to Professional Competition of Generative AI. *Journal. Pract.* **2024**, 1–18. [CrossRef]
15. Nichols, T.M. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2017; ISBN 978-0-19-046941-2.
16. Waddell, T.F. A Robot Wrote This? How Perceived Machine Authorship Affects News Credibility. *Digit. Journal.* **2018**, *6*, 236–255. [CrossRef]
17. Altay, S.; Gilardi, F. People Are Skeptical of Headlines Labeled as AI-Generated, Even If True or Human-Made, Because They Assume Full AI Automation. *PNAS Nexus* **2024**, *3*, pgae403. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
18. Aydın, B.; İnce, M. Can artificial intelligence write news: A research on determining the effect of artificial intelligence on news writing practice. *Intermedia Int. E-J.* **2024**, *11*, 24–41. [CrossRef]
19. Cyrek, B. Potentials and pitfalls of using ChatGPT in journalism. *Zarządzanie Mediami* **2024**, *2023*, 195–210. [CrossRef]
20. Berber Sardinha, T. AI-Generated vs Human-Authored Texts: A Multidimensional Comparison. *Appl. Corpus Linguist.* **2024**, *4*, 100083. [CrossRef]
21. Georgiou, G.P. Differentiating between Human-Written and AI-Generated Texts Using Linguistic Features Automatically Extracted from an Online Computational Tool. *arXiv* **2024**, arXiv:2407.03646.
22. Gherheș, V.; Fărcașiu, M.A.; Cernicova-Buca, M. Are ChatGPT-Generated Headlines Better Attention Grabbers than Human-Authored Ones? An Assessment of Salient Features Driving Engagement with Online Media. *Journal. Media* **2024**, *5*, 1817–1835. [CrossRef]
23. Lermann Henestrosa, A.; Kimmerle, J. The Effects of Assumed AI vs. Human Authorship on the Perception of a GPT-Generated Text. *Journal. Media* **2024**, *5*, 1085–1097. [CrossRef]
24. Graefe, A.; Haim, M.; Haarmann, B.; Brosius, H.-B. Readers' Perception of Computer-Generated News: Credibility, Expertise, and Readability. *Journalism* **2018**, *19*, 595–610. [CrossRef]
25. Ioscote, F.; Gonçalves, A.; Quadros, C. Artificial Intelligence in Journalism: A Ten-Year Retrospective of Scientific Articles (2014–2023). *Journal. Media* **2024**, *5*, 873–891. [CrossRef]
26. Isani, S. Of Headlines & Headlines: Towards Distinctive Linguistic and Pragmatic Genericity. *ASp la revue du GERAS* **2011**, *60*, 81–102. [CrossRef]
27. Develotte, C.; Rechniewski, E. Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Headlines: A Methodological Framework for Research into National Representations. *Web J. Fr. Media Stud.* **2001**, *4*, 1–12.
28. Khramchenko, D.S. How Headlines Communicate: A Functional-Pragmatic Analysis of Small-Format Texts in English-Language Mass Media. *TLC* **2023**, *7*, 30–38. [CrossRef]
29. Kuiken, J.; Schuth, A.; Spitters, M.; Marx, M. Effective Headlines of Newspaper Articles in a Digital Environment. *Digit. Journal.* **2017**, *5*, 1300–1314. [CrossRef]
30. Gutiérrez-Caneda, B.; Vázquez-Herrero, J.; López-García, X. AI application in journalism: ChatGPT and the uses and risks of an emergent technology. *Prof. Inf.* **2023**, *32*. [CrossRef]
31. Florea, B.; Iftene, A. The News in Brief-Leveraging Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in News Clustering, Summarization and Evaluation. 2023, pp. 119–134. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376751203_THE_NEWS_IN_BRIEF_LEVERAGING_MACHINE_LEARNING_AND_ARTIFICIAL_INTELLIGENCE_IN_NEWS_CLUSTERING_SUMMARIZATION_AND_EVALUATION (accessed on 20 December 2024).
32. Wu, S. Journalists as Individual Users of Artificial Intelligence: Examining Journalists' "Value-Motivated Use" of ChatGPT and Other AI Tools within and without the Newsroom. *Journalism* **2024**, 14648849241303047. [CrossRef]
33. Iarovici, E.; Amel, R. The Strategy of the Headline. *Semiotica* **1989**, *77*, 441–460. [CrossRef]
34. Conboy, M. *The Language of the News*; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2007; ISBN 978-0-415-37201-5.

35. Kim, M.-K.; Kang, H.-J. A Study on the Transference of Headlines and Types of Preferred Headlines in Offline and Online Newspapers. *J. Digit. Converg.* **2011**, *9*, 89–106. [CrossRef]
36. Serdali, B.K.; Ashirbekova, G.S.; Isaeva, Z.; Adieva, P.M. Newspaper Headings as a Means of Presenting Priority and Secondary Information. *Int. J. Environ. Sci. Educ.* **2016**, *11*, 4729–4738.
37. Halliday, M.A.K. *Explorations in the Functions of Language*; Edward Arnold: London, UK, 1973; ISBN 978-0-7131-1738-7.
38. Jakobson, R. Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics. In *Style in Language*; MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1960; pp. 350–377.
39. Searle, J.R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*; Cambridge University Press: London, UK, 1969; ISBN 978-0-521-07184-0.
40. Leech, G.N. *Principles of Pragmatics*; Longman: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 1983; ISBN 978-0-582-55110-7.
41. O’Keefe, D.J. *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, 3rd ed.; SAGE Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2015; ISBN 978-1-4522-7667-0.
42. Perloff, R.M. *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century*, 8th ed.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2023; ISBN 978-1-003-29005-6.
43. Dijk, T.A.V. *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach*, 1st ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2014; ISBN 978-1-107-07124-7.
44. Crystal, D. *The Gift of the Gab: How Eloquence Works*; Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, USA, 2016; ISBN 978-0-300-21426-0.
45. Hagoort, P.; Indefrey, P. The Neurobiology of Language Beyond Single Words. *Annu. Rev. Neurosci.* **2014**, *37*, 347–362. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
46. Van Dijk, T.A. *News as Discourse*; L. Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, NJ, USA, 1988; ISBN 978-0-8058-0065-4.
47. Reah, D. *The Language of Newspapers*; Psychology Press: London, UK, 2002; ISBN 978-0-415-27804-1.
48. Bell, A. *The Language of News Media*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA, USA, 1991; ISBN 978-0-631-16434-0.
49. Richardson, J.E. *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*; Macmillan Education: London, UK, 2007; ISBN 978-1-4039-3565-6.
50. Keeble, R. *The Newspapers Handbook*; Routledge: London, UK, 2001; ISBN 978-0-415-24083-3.
51. Fogg, B.J. Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change What We Think and Do. *Ubiquity* **2002**, *2002*, 2. [CrossRef]
52. Scott, K. You Won’t Believe What’s in This Paper! Clickbait, Relevance and the Curiosity Gap. *J. Pragmat.* **2021**, *175*, 53–66. [CrossRef]
53. Fărcașiu, M.A.; Gherheș, V. Exploring Linguistic Strategies in Romanian Clickbait Headlines: Communication Tactics in Online Media. *Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timisoara: Transactions on Modern Languages/Buletinul științific al Universității Politehnica din Timișoara: Seria Limbi Moderne* **2024**, *23*. Available online: https://dspace.upt.ro/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/6926/BUPT_ART_Farcasiu_Gherhes_f.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed on 20 December 2024). [CrossRef]
54. Ifantidou, E. Newspaper Headlines and Relevance: Ad Hoc Concepts in Ad Hoc Contexts. *J. Pragmat.* **2009**, *41*, 699–720. [CrossRef]
55. Diez-Gracia, A.; Sánchez-García, P.; Palau-Sampio, D.; Sánchez-Sobradillo, I. Clickbait Contagion in International Quality Media: Tabloidisation and Information Gap to Attract Audiences. *Soc. Sci.* **2024**, *13*, 430. [CrossRef]
56. Berger, J.; Milkman, K.L. What Makes Online Content Viral? *J. Mark. Res.* **2012**, *49*, 192–205. [CrossRef]
57. Tereszkievicz, A. Headlines in British and German Online Newspapers. *Kwart. Neofilologiczny* **2012**, *59*, 465–480.
58. Selimi, F. The Informativeness of Headlines in Daily Newspapers Printed in Western Balkans. In *Management in Marketing Communications*; IntechOpen: London, UK, 2024; ISBN 978-0-85466-619-5.
59. Lee, N.Y. Headlines for Summarizing News or Attracting Readers’ Attention? Comparing News Headlines in South Korean Newspapers with the New York Times. *Journalism* **2022**, *23*, 892–909. [CrossRef]
60. Broscoteanu, D.-M.; Ionescu, R.T. A Novel Contrastive Learning Method for Clickbait Detection on RoCliCo: A Romanian Clickbait Corpus of News Articles. *arXiv* **2023**, arXiv:2310.06540.
61. George, D.; Mallery, P. *SPSS for Windows Step by Step: A Simple Guide and Reference, 11.0 Update*; Allyn and Bacon: Boston, MA, USA, 2003; ISBN 978-0-205-37552-3.
62. Howitt, D.; Cramer, D. *Introduction to Statistics in Psychology*; Pearson Education: Boston, MA, USA, 2008; ISBN 0-13-205161-3.
63. Tabachnick, B.G.; Fidell, L.S. *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed.; Pearson: Boston, MA, USA; Munich, Germany, 2012; ISBN 978-0-205-84957-4.

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.