

Rage bait: How online anger makes money

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Phil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Phil.

Beth

And I'm Beth.

Phil

If you use the internet, and nearly everyone does, you've probably read headlines like this:

You won't believe what plastic surgery this celebrity has had done!

Known as clickbait, headlines like these are used to grab your attention and make you read more.

Beth

But now, a new trend called **rage bait** is spreading across social media. Rage bait is online content designed to make you angry or outraged.

In this programme, we'll explore the trend of rage-baiting, and, as usual, we'll learn some useful new vocabulary, all of which you can find on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Phil

Great, but first it's time for my question, Beth, which is about the two terms we've been using: 'clickbait' and '**rage bait**'. Both contain the word, 'bait', but what is its actual meaning? Is bait:

- a) a strong feeling of anger?
- b) food put on a hook to catch fish or animals?
- c) a piece of computer software?

Beth

I am fairly confident that it is b) – food put on a hook.

Phil

OK. Well, we'll find out the correct answer later in the programme. Here's how **rage bait** works: a creator posts a provocative piece of content online, a message maybe, or a video. People see it, feel outraged, and comment angrily. Others see it, like it and share it around. Either way, the content creates interest, increases internet traffic and makes money for the creator. Here's marketing strategist, Andrea Jones, explaining more to Megan Lawton, presenter of BBC World Service programme, Business Daily:

Andrea Jones

The more content they create, **the more** engagement they get, **the more** that they get paid. And so they will do anything... some creators will do anything to get more views because the more views they get, the more that they get paid, even if, even if, those views are negative or **inciting** rage and anger in people.

Megan Lawton

Andrea, how is rage bait different to clickbait or other online tactics? [...]

Andrea Jones

As a marketer, I'm always, you know, coaching my clients and talking to them about using hooks in their marketing, right? And I think the difference between a hook and rage bait or even its long-lost cousin, clickbait content... When we think about a hook, to me a hook accurately reflects what's in that piece of content and

it comes from a place of trust, whereas rage-baiting content is designed to be **manipulative**.

Beth

Andrea says **the more** reaction a post gets, **the more** money the creator makes, even if the reactions are hateful. She uses the structure, **the more** one thing happens, **the more** something else happens, to show that as one thing happens repeatedly, so another thing increases as a result. For example, **the more** you practise English, **the more** you'll improve.

Phil

It doesn't matter that the content is designed to **incite** outrage – to encourage unpleasant or violent reactions. That's why Andrea thinks rage bait is worse than clickbait. While **clickbait** is more truthful about its content, rage bait is **manipulative**, meaning it tries to influence something to its own advantage.

Beth

So, it's not hard to see why many people think rage bait is toxic. So, if you're wondering why people react in the first place, listen as Dr William Brady explains the psychology behind rage bait to BBC World Service's, Business Daily:

Dr William Brady

If you are an influencer and you want to figure out, 'Well, how do I get more **eyeballs** on my content?' Well, you need to exploit those **biases** we have in our psychology because that's the content we'll pay more attention to. In turn that's the content that algorithms will amplify, which ultimately means more advertising revenue.

Phil

Influencers want more **eyeballs** on their content – more people to view their website or social media posts – and use human psychology to do it. Psychologically speaking, we all have **biases** – feelings – which are often unconscious, either for or against a certain idea or group of people.

Beth

Biases are emotional, and since listening to our emotions has been vital to the evolution of the human species, creators know that provoking our emotions will grab our attention.

Phil

So, what can be done to combat rage bait? Well, we could all take a moment to think before reacting. And remember that by sharing something outrageous you might be making things worse, while also making the creator richer.

Beth

OK, Phil, let's reveal the answer to your question. You asked me what 'bait' is.

Phil

I did. And the correct answer is b) food put on a hook to catch a fish or an animal, and isn't that what you said, Beth?

Beth

It is, yes.

Phil

Right again! OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in the programme, starting with **rage bait**, social media content designed to provoke anger, thereby encouraging people to engage with it.

Beth

The structure, **the more... the more...** describes the situation when one thing happening repeatedly results in another thing happening too.

Phil

To **incite** someone means to encourage them to do or feel something unpleasant or violent.

Beth

The adjective, **manipulative**, describes trying to influence or control someone to your own advantage.

Phil

Eyeballs is an informal word for the number of people viewing a particular website or television programme.

Beth

And finally, **biases** are feelings, often unconscious, either for or against an idea or a group of people. Once again, our six minutes are up. Goodbye for now!

Phil

Bye!

VOCABULARY

rage bait

social media content designed to provoke an emotional reaction so that people engage with the content thereby generating income for the online creator

the more (X)... the more (Y)...

as one thing (X) happens repeatedly, another thing (Y) happens more as a result

incite

encourage someone to do or feel something unpleasant or violent; stir up; provoke; rouse

manipulative

trying to influence or control someone to your advantage

eyeballs

the number of people viewing a particular website, television programme etc.

biases

feelings, often hidden or unconscious, either for or against an idea or a group of people