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Journalism and Metrics

It seems that in the ever-evolving digital age, we are looking for quick laughs and instant gratification. We turn to apps for everything from photo sharing to dating. We want our Internet faster and prefer to communicate via text. We flock to catchy headlines, and sex still sells. Articles about Kim Kardashian’s butt in tight tan pants get almost more page views than those on flight MH370, and if we lifted our heads up from the bright light of our LED screens for just a second, we’d see how ridiculous this all is.

Whether we like it or not, our readers want this superficial tabloid-like content. We prefer six second viral videos to movies, and can hardly take the time to read through anything more than 400 words. This superficial reader-base is making it that much harder for journalists around the world to report the news and inform the people. It’s all about web traffic and page views. Stock market updates and political banter are not catching the eye, or the mouse of readers in the way that they used to. In a recent article by Poynter, newsrooms that have ignored web metrics are seen as outdated. The growing, vain desire vain desires for page views is not meant to take place of journalistic practices, but serve as an enhancement.

Web metrics are the way of the future, and it seems that newspapers and magazines that once had high readership are playing second fiddle to “news” sources like BuzzFeed, Media Take Out, and Upworthy. What sets these outlets apart is that they are interactive. They provide quizzes, graphics, and videos, where your standard paper does not. It was not until recently, when networks like CNN and the *New York Times*, started using multimedia features as they did in their Snow Fall project, much like CNN has been doing with their coverage of MH370. It’s this interactivity that has boosted both ratings and readership.

So, unless news networks jump on the bandwagon and move towards a more interactive and fast-paced layout, readers will keep frequenting E! Online and Perez Hilton. The readers keep us in business and what they want right now is light and fluffy. It’s our job to re-package hard news in that way, if not, it won’t be long before a slew of cat videos accompanied by a semblance of a news blurb take over the internet, our tablets and whatever device of the future we are glued to next.