Discursive strategies in headlines and leads of online articles: intention vs. realization

Digesting Crises in Europe (DICE): Deconstructing and Constructing Media Texts in Dialogue - Ohrid, August 2017

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The intention of articles in modern media:

✓ To comply with the message.
✓ To fit the target audience.
✓ To predetermine the perception of news.

Realization by answering:

The headline of an article

What?
Text indicating the nature of the article below it.

How?
Attention-getting headlines

Source:
https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/headline-writing-tips
Good headlines

**Effective words**

**Adjectives and nouns:** amazing, disturbing, fearless, irresistible, stunning, etc.

**Ingredients, lessons, principles, strategies, techniques, etc.**

**Call-to-action words**

beautify, eliminate, generate, increase, move, overcome, shape, use, etc.

**Guide definitions**

A 100 ways to, beginner’s level, user-friendly, etc.

**Positive vs. Negative words**

easiest, ever, hottest, most, etc.

avoid, never, no one, worst, etc.
6 easy-to-use headline formulas that grab attention in secs

1. **Number** + **Adjective** + **Keyword** + **Promise**
2. **How to** + **Action** + **Keyword** + **Promise**
3. **Definition** + **Guide to** + **Action** + **Keyword** + **Promise**
4. **Positive Word** + **Number and/or Noun** + **Keyword** + **Promise or Details**
5. **Negative Word** + **Action** + **Keyword**
6. **Call-to-Action** + **Keyword** + **Promise**
Example:

**Subject:**
“shaving cows”

**Either:**
“How to Shave a Cow”

**Or:**
“10 Simple *Ways You Can Shave a Cow Wherever You Are*”
The lead of an article

Who? Journalist to audience
What? The most important part of a news story.
Where? Online media, social networks, blogs, etc.
When? Preferably on a daily basis!
Why? Audiences not willing to read beyond the first paragraph (and even sentence)
How? Grab the audience’s interest!

Source:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/05/
Example:

A journalist writing to an audience claims that the most important part of a news story in online media should be written on a daily basis because audiences are not willing to read beyond the first sentence if their interest is not grabbed in a few words!

Though ridiculous – the lead is effective!
Basic strategies  (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 44-45)

1. **Reference or nomination**: How are social actors, objects, phenomena and events named and referred to linguistically?

2. **Predication**: Which characteristics and features are attributed to the actors, objects and phenomena?

3. **Argumentation**: How are claims of truth justified?

4. **Perspectivization**: How is the point of view of the producer of a text positioned?

5. **Intensifying and mitigating**: To what extent are the force and status of utterances modified?
Practice

Microsoft Word
7 - 2003 Document
Additional reading