

Sanders Running for President

The announcement of Senator Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential bid was reported slightly differently by newspapers from varying media organizations. After looking at headlines from twelve different media publications, I found a few overarching themes that headlines either explicitly said or alluded to. All of the headlines I looked at broke on February 19th to ensure that the news was timely (Walsh, 2017), and all twelve came from either news sources or sources that fairly interpret the news (Otero, 2018). Additionally, most sources that I chose are fairly neutral or skewed only slightly left or right (Otero, 2018). One exception is *Fox* news, which although it is listed as hyper-partisan right, I chose to include a headline from the publication because of the news organization's popularity and influence. There were sources that referenced Sanders' past campaign, mentioned the crowded nature of the race, alluded to his chances of winning or quoted him. Through these headlines, I came to believe that the goal of these publications went beyond just reporting on Sanders, but that they also sought to bring public interest to the presidential race as a whole.

One way the headlines made the race seem exciting is by alluding to Sanders' chances of winning. A headline by *NBC* says, "Bernie Sanders enters 2020 presidential race: 'Complete the revolution'" (Seitz-Wald, 2019). This headline uses a Sanders' quote that references his ideas to "revolutionize" government, while also using the verb "complete". The wording of this headline suggests that Sanders is still working towards something rather than failing in the first election and coming back. A headline by *NPR* says, "Bernie Sanders Launches 2020 Presidential Campaign, No Longer An Underdog" (Detrow and Taylor, 2019). This suggests that Sander's

chances are better this campaign season than they once were, and paints his presidential bid in a favorable light. By suggesting the likelihood that Sanders will win, the publications are able to stress the uncertainty of the race and make it seem more exciting to the reader.

Other publications also referenced Sander's past bid, but in such a way that reminds the reader of Sanders' failure. The *BBC* says, "Bernie Sanders announces second US presidential bid" (BBC, 2019) and *Reuters* says, "Bernie Sanders to Run for President Again in 2020" (Reuters, 2019). Although neither of these headlines explicitly say anything negative about the previous run, it can be assumed by the reader that Sanders lost the previous election. Whether or not the reader followed the previous election, the fact that Sanders is running a "second time" or "again" combined with the knowledge that Sanders is not the president must mean that he lost. A more explicitly skeptical headline from *Bloomberg* says, "Can Bernie Sanders re-create the magic? Vermont senator joins 2020 Democratic race" (Halper, 2019). This headline associates magic with a previous campaign that failed, and then suggests that he might perform worse this time. By speculating over Sanders' chances, these news organizations are able to assign suspense to the race and attract interest to the competition.

The headlines also use other candidates to remind the reader of the race's competitiveness. A headline by *CNN* says, "Sanders joins growing list of 2020 Democratic candidates" (Nobles, 2019) and a headline by *Fox* says, "Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders enters crowded 2020 presidential race" (Gaydos and Steinhauser, 2019). Both of these headlines take the focus of Sanders' bid away from him by making it clear he is one in a group of many. The word "growing" suggests that the list of candidates is in the process of getting larger and the word "crowded" suggests that the list is larger than usual. By bringing attention to the unusual quantity of candidates, the publication portrays the race as something out of the ordinary, and

this makes the subject seem more newsworthy (Walsh, 2017). By widening the news of Sanders' bid to news of the race as a whole, the publication can expand the reader's interest from just Sanders to other candidates as well.

Other publications shied away from referencing other candidates and tried to keep the focus on Sanders. This was done by quoting him. *Bloomberg* says, "Bernie Sanders Announces Presidential Run, Calls Trump an 'Embarrassment'" (Arit, 2019). This headline tells the reader a little about Sanders' opinions, which causes him to stand out from the other candidates. In addition, his criticism of Trump introduces conflict, which could make the headline more compelling to readers (Walsh, 2017). The previously referenced headline by *NBC*: "Bernie Sanders enters 2020 presidential race: 'Complete the revolution'" (Seitz-Wald, 2019) also tells the reader a little bit about Sanders' views. This headline tells the reader that Sanders considers his platform revolutionary, which then suggests that he is radically different from the other candidates. By choosing which quotes to include, news media has the ability to choose how Sanders is portrayed. The use of these quotes causes Sanders to stand apart from his opponents, making him a prominent figure and therefore more newsworthy (Walsh, 2017).

Despite the few headlines that were more focused on Sanders, most headlines made a suggestion about Sanders' chances or referenced the other candidates, bringing attention to the presidential race as a whole. By doing so, news media will then be able to garner interest for headlines about other candidates in the future. Additionally, by keeping focus on the exciting, competitive nature of the race, news publications are able to paint the competition as suspenseful. This makes the news more compelling to its audience and thereby fulfills the publication's goal to present the news in an interesting and relevant light (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). Though different publications differ in the way that they announced Sanders'

run, many of the publications were similar in the way that they attempted to bring attention to the race itself. By studying multiple news sources, I learned that regardless of whether Sanders was portrayed positively or negatively across the political spectrum, the news media was consistent in their attempt to make his bid more exciting by referencing the broader competition.

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