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VIRTUALLY THERE

VIRAL FEVER



Desi links Taking cues from websites like BuzzFeed and Upworthy, new Indian portals are telling local stories through witty lists, photo features and video posts

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You've probably clicked, shared and scrolled through several posts on BuzzFeed.com, a website now famous for its feel-good 'listicle' format (17 Dogs All Cozy in their Christmas Pajamas; 45 Moving Images From the First Days of Marriage Equality in Utah, etc).

Closer home, recently launched Indian websites are adopting similar formats for localised content, with similarly styled witty lists, photo features, video stories and other hyper-contemporary content that users can consume quickly.

"It's more copywriting, less journalism," says Sattvik Mishra, co-founder of ScoopWhoop, one such site. "We think of ourselves as content writers, rather than journalists. For instance, we recently did a post about Arvind Kejriwal's rise, told entirely through iconic photographs. In that sense, we are curating content for our readers, but not necessarily creating it."

It's no longer just about having good content, but also about how many people are sharing what's on your website, adds

Varun Patra, co-founder of Homegrown, another website that finds inspiration in portals such as BuzzFeed. "We are experimenting with different media — videos, photo stories, picture profiles of people etc. The key is to create stories that people want to share with others."

SCOOPWHOOOP

Launched in August by four advertising professionals, as an Indian cross between BuzzFeed and Upworthy, which focuses on inspiring video feeds. Within a few weeks, posts started going viral and the founders quit their day jobs. The page currently gets about 2 million hits a month, says co-founder Sattvik Mishra.

Recent features include '30 signs you grew up as a fauji kid'; '18 Virat Kohli memes that are so good, you'll die laughing'; 'Her idea of fighting corruption is so cool, you would want to fist bump her' (on anti-corruption crusader Swati Ramanathan, founder of IPaidABribe.com)

HOMEGROWN

Launched in September by Natalia Lasota, a former film production and marketing executive; Mandovi Menon,

a writer; and Varun Patra, a digital marketer, as a platform for sub-cultures within the Indian art, music, fashion and lifestyle spaces.

"We do a lot of BuzzFeed-style content, but are not limited to that," says co-founder Varun Patra. "We are part publication, part creative agency, and like to experiment with story formats. While our focus is Indian content, including some satire, we also write about some foreign art and culture movements that we think Indians would want to know about and be inspired by."

NEWS THAT MATTERS NOT

Launched three years ago by engineering graduates Tanay Sukumar, Bijender Sheoran and Sugandha (who goes by only one name), as a satire website inspired by The Onion, News That Matters Not (NTMN) now also covers popular culture, news analysis and youth affairs.

A recent post, for example, is titled 'New eye-patches available in the market for men who say women should not wear short clothes'.

"Instead of always sending you into fits of laughter, NTMN intends to make you think as you get amused," says Sheoran.