THE CASE OF FAMILY VLOGGERS

Are they capitalising on the lives of children?

SAAMIN AZAM SUHA

In recent years, the practice of *vlogging* on online platforms, most notably YouTube, has grown exponentially. As vlogging is something that can be done in the comfort of one's home and on their own time, it is appealing to many. Popular vloggers earn a huge revenue from this as well. Due to this, many families are making this their primary source of income.

In hindsight, this seems like a great solution for those attracted by the culture of vlogging. Now, they can make content with their entire family, while earning enough to support them all. They get to work in a stress-free environment and aren't limited to particular hours. Sounds like a dream come true, then what is the problem?

At the heart of family vlogging channels lie the children—they are the prime attraction, the very reason so many people tune in to these channels. They captivate the audience with their charm and innocence, without seeming staged. Their parents sell merchandise with their faces on it, and fans even go as far as to make fanpages in their behalf. Yet, at the end of the day, they are still *children*. It seems extremely unfair for them to shoulder the burden of their family's income at such a young age, albeit unknowingly.

It's even worse that we have no idea what goes on behind the scenes. Who's to say that these kids even *want* to star in their parent's vlogging channels, or whether or not they're comfortable with having a camera shoved in their face all the time? Making home videos of your kids is common, but it's a completely different scenario when you upload those videos regularly online for millions of people to watch. Their entire childhood is being documented and shared with strangers when they can't even comprehend the meaning of that.

For many of these kids—many of them toddlers—they even have to maintain a strict recording schedule to provide weekly content. Children are known for their inability to stay committed to one task for too long, and yet they have to shoot videos for hours. The bigger the channel grows, the greater those hours become. Could this be classified as immoral?

The former YouTube channel *Daddy-OFive* is a prime example of this. The vlogging family consisted of Mike and Heather Martin and their five children, and were notorious for uploading "prank" videos. These pranks often consisted of them emotionally and physically abusing their children in the guise of humour. This eventually resulted in a controversy, after which their channel was terminated and they lost custody of their two youngest kids, the ones most targeted by the abuse.

It would be unfair to classify every family vlogging channel as the aforementioned. As a spectator, one can only make assumptions regarding the treatment of these children, and whether or not they truly want this lifestyle. But as we watch these channels grow, more merchandise being made, and the amount of content increasing to an alarming amount, the question remains: is this truly because of the children's passion, or the greed of the parents?

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What to do with old tech

FAIZA ADIL

Everyone gets stuck with obsolete and unwanted tech, some of us shove them into a box and hoard it for months. Electronics aren't meant to last forever and eventually all end up unwanted, so what do we do then?

WHY CAN'T I JUST THROW THEM OUT?
Electronic waste contains a number of toxic materials and substances like lead, mercury and cadmium. When we dispose of e-waste, they end up in the garbage disposal system where most inevitably are incinerated, this means all of these harmful substances pollute the air. Apart from global warming, throwing out tech gives rise to a myriad other environmental concerns, from polluting the soil and groundwater to harmful repercussions on our ecosystem.

The rich substances and precious metals in electronics can have a second life, if extracted. For people with low income and the impoverished, e-waste provides additional income but without proper knowledge on how to protect themselves, they put themselves at risk. People involved in dismantling and recycling electronics become endangered to various carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic health hazards. Nearly 100 percent of electronic waste is recyclable but Bangladesh still lacks proper systems for safe disposal and recycling, but there's a lot we can do ourselves too.

ONE MAN'S TRASH IS ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE
What's useless to you can still be used by other people. Old laptops, computers, tabs and phones are often replaced by new ones, rendering them useless to you, but for a struggling family, an orphanage or an impoverished school your old tech can still be used productively. Donate your unwanted technology as most can make some use of them even if they're barely working. Charities and underprivileged communities aren't hard to reach out to and you can do your share of giving.

HOW CAN I RECYCLE THEM?
If your old tech isn't salvageable enough to be donated, you can sell or give them away to the local businesses that make a living out of properly recycling and refurbishing electronics for resale. Electronic recycling shops are tucked away everywhere in Dhaka, piled to the top with dusty used gadgets but if this isn't an option, many companies and businesses that sell electronics also offer to take them back when you stop using them.

REUSING UNUSED TECH
If you're handy with electronics, you could dismantle and use parts of your laptops, computers, consoles and phones in making other ones. If you're more on the creative side, the internet offers a million different ways you can use old tech in DIY projects, from photo frames and decorations to computer cat beds—anything is possible.

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PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

Extend the life of your electronics. Buy a case, keep your device clean, and avoid overcharging the battery.

NAMES FOR BANGLADESHI GAMES

ABHOY HRIDDO

Video games is the biggest form of popular culture in our generation. Most video games we play are based off fictional stories or real life events that take place in a foreign land, usually where the game is developed, like the US, Japan, or maybe Europe. This got me thinking, what if there were games like this but based in Bangladesh? How would they be, and what would we call them?

MISHTI CRUSH
Candy Crush is a free-to-play match-three puzzle video game released by King that your parents are hooked on. The story follows a character named Toffette as he travels through the Candy Kingdom bringing joy and happiness through Candy. As the game progresses more characters are introduced and the difficulty increases. Now imagine the same concept but instead of Candy Kingdom, you travel through South Asia in a small cart to sell sweets. The gameplay will pretty much be the same but the tiles will be replaced with iconic sweets of South Asia like *roshogolla, mawar laddu, kaalojam, chomchom, Muktagachar monda* and so on. The cart will travel from the quiet mountains of Sylhet to metropolitans like Dhaka. Passing a set of levels will allow you to earn points and customise your cart. Different regions will mean different sweet cravings with different challenges and different types of consumers. Instead of a sultry voice saying words like "Sweet", "Tasty" or "Divine" when there are impressive matches, you could have some Dhakaiya dude scream "*Mitha*" or "*MAAAKKKHHOOON*".
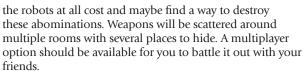
SENTU MIA'S CIVILIZATION
One of the biggest problems in our country is how horrible and unpredictable traffic jams are. You could probably attribute all of this to unplanned infrastructure or lack of it altogether. Now imagine this, you're on the Iron Throne of Bangladesh, rebuilding our infrastructure, fixing traffic congestion and transforming the whole nation into a paradise. And the best part, you can do it over thousands of years. Much like the *Sid Meier's Civilization* series, the gameplay should focus on building, resource management and exploring new opportunities. Throughout the game, global crises will disrupt the economy you've built. It could be our neighbours not exporting onions or the West not buying ready-made garments, or inexplicably, a global ban on prawn, you'll have to face these challenges head on try to stop it from putting your country into ruins. Beware of whatever equivalent of "Nuclear Gandhi" our *deshi* game spews up.

FIVE NIGHTS AT FARID'S
Five Nights at Freddy's is one of the most popular games of our time. Its story is mysterious, gameplay is fresh and villains are terrifying. Imagine the same concept with a sprinkle of Old Dhaka, specifically the older buildings with history, character, and a lot of structural damage. A rickety, shady house filled with killer robots, which are powered by souls of dead goats that have given their lives for *biriyani*, and their sole purpose is to grab you by the throat and shove you into a drain that's already overflowing. Absolute bonkers! Your objective would be to stay alive avoiding the robots at all cost and maybe find a way to destroy these abominations. Weapons will be scattered around multiple rooms with several places to hide. A multiplayer option should be available for you to battle it out with your friends.

BHAAT ER HOTEL SIMULATOR
This takes inspiration from the many similar simulator games set in foreign lands. It's a simple point and click game. Take the *bhaat*, put it on a plate, and serve it to the customer. Sounds simple enough, right? Well it will be once you get the hang of it. The game will start off with you as a small restaurant owner in an alleyway. As you level up, you'll be introduced to new customers, new areas, new problems and new cuisines. Upgrades are readily available and decorations keep cycling throughout the store. The more you devote to the restaurant, the more chances of it to become a world class fine dine. Rising from a small restaurant to a world-class chain will be a journey to enjoy. An online mechanic could be introduced in the game where you could get to see other people's restaurants and, if needed, buy some decorations from them. The game may have a bidding system where, after your restaurant is big enough, you could sell unwanted branches and players may bid to buy it from you. This would increase player interactions and will add a certain new dynamic of the game, and in-game transactions are mostly good for business.

KHALED MAHMUD CRICKET 2020
Yeah, you read that right. A lot of us have played *Don Bradman Cricket 14*, but what if they made it special for Bangladesh. Maybe there could be 30 wicket games when Bangladesh plays. Thirty wickets might seem excessive but with Bangladeshi batsmen and a realistic representation of their skills, the wickets will be dropping like dominoes. If you make the bowlers mediocre enough, we might even get some competitive matches. The player system could be like FIFA's ultimate team as you gather cards of different rarities and build your dream team. Matches will be about 20 to 30 minutes long and game mechanics will be the usual. Playing against India will be the hardest as none of the decisions will be in your team's favour.

PEYAJUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS
The recent kerfuffle with the onions was a big hit for the country. People scoured for these little orbs like crazy and their price skyrocketed. This led to onions being sold out very quickly after stores opened. Imagine that there's the last kilo of onions in Bangladesh and a 100 people are out to get it. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to obtain these onions by any means and get back home as fast as possible. Grab weapons ranging from chairs to raw fishes and smack the life out of your opponents. As time flies, the *kacha bazar* will shrink, bringing your opponents closer together. Maps will be ranging from Town Hall bazar's malodorous alleys to Meena Bazar's sleek hallways.

Well here you have it folks, these are some of my picks for Bangladeshi names of popular games. We don't have these games yet but we sure hope they'll come around, maybe one of the new studios can come up with something, or maybe YOU could come up with the studio that comes up with it.

Abhoy Hriddo is an antisocial teenaged geek who would prefers to sit at home and play Call of Duty during Valentine's Day. Be sure to torment him at abhoyhriddo@gmail.com

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