

Bloggers: escaping an online identity crisis

My grandparents used to think 'blogger' was another word for criminal. They would see the word being frequently accompanied by tags like 'blasphemy', 'arrested' or 'murdered', with newspapers everywhere deeming blogs as tools for spreading propaganda. All this bad press about blogging can be very misleading to a person who has never heard of it before. But it is confusing not just for them.

The public is now quite uncomfortable with using this term in a general sense because of the negative publicity surrounding it. We need to ask ourselves if it is justified that fear should be so closely associated with the collective blogger identity here in Bangladesh.

"Blog" is the truncated expression for web log. Just think of it as a journal or a scrapbook which will never run out of pages for us to fill; all it takes is a click for the rest of the world to discover and look into it. Bearing that in mind, we can safely



accept that each status, tweet or photo that we post on the web is essentially a blog, because blogging, at its core, is a way of expressing ourselves.

Before the advent of social media, blogs were the central points of communication for people online. As more and more people started connecting over their shared

interests, the bloggers' community flourished. Although blogs which discuss hot topics in politics and pop-culture are still more widely read, we can find entire blogs dedicated to things as seemingly mundane as oatmeal.

We need to remember that blogs can be anything we want them to be, and that's possible only because they are channels of free speech. No topic is too bizarre; we will usually be able to find a blogger who is an expert in our field of interest, no matter how unconventional it is.

Even if we do not immediately find a blog related to our interest, there is nothing stopping us from starting our own. If we think about it, we all have to depend on combined knowledge to get ahead in our lives. If anything, blogs are tools for progress; the misplaced apprehension currently presiding over blogging needs to be put to rest.

By Antara Islam

Essential blogs!

Bangladesh has officially arrived at the mainstream blogosphere. Although we have been active contributors to the online blogging community for a long time, it is only in the recent years that we started to expand our reach into trending lifestyle issues.

Bangladeshi blogs are stirring up a lot of attention not just with their political posts, but also with their refreshing perspective on fashion, beauty trends and travelogues. The few blogs that are mentioned here were set up by impassioned Bangladeshis fueled by creativity, and their painstaking effort behind delivering each content is truly remarkable. If you haven't bookmarked these already, do it now.

THE BANGLADESHI STREET-STYLE

Fashion and beauty go hand in hand when it comes to today's cosmopolitan women. The two most popular fashion blogs right now are velvetveins.blogspot.com and thedailylifeofafashionoholic.blogspot.com.

When it comes to showcasing their individual style or the vibrant posts themselves, these women know exactly what it takes to make us stop in awe.

"I love how edgy their style is, I could never pair this and that from my favourite local brands as beautifully as they have", says SadiaHoque, an avid follower.

Sanjukta Roy, another regular reader says, "We don't need to look to the West for inspiration anymore as these blogs make it easy for me to discover shops around my city which sell just the perfect clothes and accessories I need for a unique ensemble."

The beautiful women responsible for the artfully curated content deserve to be lauded for inspiring this generation of fashion followers to embrace products made in Bangladesh. For more inspiration,

check out their Instagram feed.

UPPING YOUR GLAM-QUOTIENT

Makeup video tutorials are more useful than blogposts and YouTube has a large and ever-growing international community of beauty vloggers, with Bangladesh having joined very recently.

SharifaEasmin is one such beauty vlogger who executes each of her looks with mix of panache and sophistication.

tutorials and takes a more holistic approach to beauty. It is worth noting that all her videos are in Bangla so they are very easy to understand. Additional shout-outs to SinthiaRahman and Makeup magic with Nuz for their contemporary makeup and beauty tutorials.

NOT JUST 'MAACH-BHAAT'

We all have a copy of SiddikaKabir's famous cookbook which tops our list of Bangladeshi household essentials. But if

sites stood out for me because of their mobile-friendly interface and straightforward instructions: banglarecipes.com.au; rummanaskitchen.com, and bangladeshikitchen.blogspot.co.uk

Do check these out! Because you just might end up with a renewed appreciation for Bangladeshi cuisine.

BANGLADESH, REDISCOVERED

Perhaps the prospect of conquering Mt. Everest seems far-fetched to you right now, it could be something that you might do in an alternate universe. But deep down, you still cannot help but appreciate how amazing it sounds. Or maybe you are just sick of feeling stuck, whether it's in the city traffic or a phase in your life, and you want to escape into Mother Nature to find solace in solitude. So for those of you who want to stop wondering and start (at the risk of sounding a bit too corny) wandering banglatrek.org will serve as the perfect guide.

This site was created to promote trekking and other outdoor activities among Bangladeshis and now hosts verified information (travel routes, accommodation, miscellaneous tips etc.) on nearly sixty hidden trails, peaks, islands and waterfalls all over the country.

"I have always found that they are quick to respond each time I need information regarding any place I want to travel to; they have never failed to provide me with the right resources", says AkhandMihir, a restless trekker and a regular visitor of their site.

You can also join their Facebook group 'Travelers of Bangladesh', and plan trips to go backpacking with the other members, who are always organising expeditions to different far off locations in our country and abroad. Be sure to also check out their events page.

By Antara Islam



When we asked her about the influence of her Bangladeshi heritage over her work, she said, "I think my culture does have some influence because I do a lot of 'desi' inspired looks. Also my skin colour obviously plays a role in the looks I do. I have a lot of 'desi' girls with deeper skin tones watching my videos."

ShahnazShimul is another passionate beauty vlogger, whose channel incorporates do-it-yourself remedies with makeup

you are like me and don't enjoy carrying a big book around while you are frantically trying to make a dish come together at the last minute, then switch to these blogs on your phone or tablet. The staggering collections of recipes in these sites ensure that you don't need to look any further when you are abroad and craving for a home-cooked Bangladeshi meal.

I have been through dozens of Bangladeshi food blogs, and these three