

It comes without a doubt that the usage of social media has absolutely exploded during the jejune times of 2020-2021. The pandemic has brought forth long periods of dullness and unexcitement, as most phenomenological events happen with the company of other people: friends, family, partners, etc. This may be a reason as to why content is popping up and falling out of popularity so often: our brains, at this hour, need stimulation in order to stay working. In person entertainment can no longer commence, and so we have moved on to the works of strangers on social media platforms. However, you may have seen that there are some works that we are far more attached and connected to than others. Works that are more appealing to the audience than others. As you may have guessed, this content is known as ‘viral content’, and it is *everywhere*. But what exactly makes a content viral? What are the requirements that our brains demand when we immerse ourselves in content?

Psychology absolutely plays a factor here. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter in our brains that makes us feel happy; when our brains encounter something that makes us feel good or is pleasant, we experience dopamine, and as a result, we are far more likely to repeat that action again. Things that are repetitive can decrease your dopamine levels and make you not want to do them again. In terms of content, this is the greatest pitfall for potential virality: the work is unvaried, and even though the activity may seem compelling at first, it is a chore for our minds to have to focus on it. For instance, let’s examine the once popular console game *Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout*. The game features the player as a cute little bean avatar competing against as many as sixty other players in a colorful, challenging obstacle course. The scenery is enigmatic, the game requires you to be on high alert, and the bean avatars are just so cute. However, the virality of this content only spanned across a few weeks, before it was overhauled by the ever popular *Among Us*. What went wrong? Ultimately, repetition was the downfall of this game: the

severe lack of updates from a long period of time gave the player base only a handful of obstacle courses to run, games to play, cute avatars to see, etc. This is why content on social media platforms such as TikTok and Vine are so popular: the videos are almost always short, second long clips that still have action packed into them. The content issued out on these platforms are still popular to this day (except for Vine, which sadly crashed in October of 2016.)

The unknown is sometimes shown as daunting to the human psyche; however, during times when the brain is craving mental stimulation, the unknown is explored and traversed, with the mind seeking adventure. Lots of viral content has been found in odd places, in the corners of the Internet, where people usually would not have gone had it not been for everlonging boredom (the pandemic). The unknown causes you to be on high alert, making your brain secrete high amounts of norepinephrine. This neurotransmitter causes you to be aware of not only your surroundings, but of the following events that may occur. This is a reason as to why the video game *Among Us* is and has remained viral for such a long time: it executes both of these two elements beautifully. In the game, you play as another adorable bean avatar aboard a spaceship; the catch is, there are two imposters aboard the ship that are attempting to eliminate you. The game is designed to boost your norepinephrine, as it is lined with suspense and forces you to be on high alert to excel. Furthermore, the game has endless possibilities as to what could happen per round, goading the player to be immersed in its content.

If you were to have a pick between exploring content that is scary, amusing or sad, which one would you prefer? The genre and theme of the content makes the audience feel further connected to the work; for example, there are some people who love to be scared by watching/reading various thrillers and other works in that genre, while others detest the idea of being terrified on purpose. According to Forbes, the most appealing genre/tone to an audience

(the one that produces the most dopamine) is amusement. This can include comedy, humour, and skits. Great examples of this genre in play are the shows *Friends* and *Master of None*. These shows are some of the all time greats to air on television, and both are hilarious comedic works. Most viral works on social media are also humorous.

Creating viral content on the Internet is a hard task. However, contrary to common belief, it is not just a matter of luck. There are sure ways for content to be viral, and furthermore, there is psychological and neurological evidence to back this up. Content is not made popular by the attractiveness of the creator or the amount of effort put in, but rather the way the work connects and influences the minds of its audience.