

Why YouTube Videos Go Viral

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New York Magazine:

Half of all YouTube videos have fewer than 500 views, but a tiny fraction of the 100 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute garner millions of hits, turning amateur filmmakers into stars or launching viral marketing campaigns. Recently, a video of a New York woman getting catcalled posted by the advocacy group Hollaback! became an internet sensation. A video of men trying to lure a drunk woman home went viral last week, before it was revealed to be a hoax. A few days ago, a clip of a man singing “Blackbird” to his dying son started making the rounds.

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In a 2011 paper in *Psychological Science*, Berger argues the most important factor in transmission is physiological arousal: Emotions that increase arousal, like anxiety and amusement, will be more effective than low-arousal emotions like sadness and contentment. To test this, Berger devised an experiment in which he showed 93 students either a neutral film clip or a clip that had been proven to evoke a specific emotion — either a highly arousing one or a less arousing one. The students were then given an unemotional article and video and asked the likelihood, on a scale of 1 to 7, that they would share them. The ones who’d been primed to feel highly aroused were more likely to say they’d pass it along — regardless of whether the emotion they were feeling was positive or negative.

Read the whole story: [New York Magazine](#)