

Not a hoax: Univision buys stake in 'Onion'

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Aiming to use humor to boost its audience, US broadcasting group Univision said Tuesday it was acquiring a stake in the satirical news group The Onion.

The New York-based Univision, which aims to reach Hispanic Americans, said in a statement it had invested an undisclosed sum in The Onion, known for its offbeat satirical stories which are sometimes mistaken for real news.

"Comedy is playing an expanding role in our culture as a vehicle for audiences to explore, debate, and understand the important ideas of our time," said Isaac Lee, chief news and digital officer of Univision.

"It has also proven to be an incredibly engaging format for millennial audiences, and is expected to play a key part in the 2016 presidential election process via our robust content offerings in Spanish and English."

Isaac said The Onion "has been, and continues to be, a leading force of this phenomenon of intellectual, social, cultural and satirical commentary online" and is "a great fit for and a significant step forward in our digital strategy as we continue to expand the ways we entertain and inform millennial and multicultural audiences."

The Onion, founded as a newspaper by University of Wisconsin students in 1988, gained notoriety for its stories which seem almost real, with headlines such as "Kitten Thinks of Nothing But Murder All Day," or "Study Reveals: Babies Are Stupid."

Sometimes the stories are too convincing. In 2012, Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency reproduced an Onion story which cited a supposed Gallup poll saying that rural white Americans preferred then Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over President Barack Obama.

Univision said it would hold a minority stake in Onion Inc., which also operates websites AV Cub and ClickHole and the digital video Onion Studios.

The broadcaster said it would seek "to leverage Univision Digital's distribution, resources and media expertise to expand the exposure of the brand" and "will work with Onion Inc.'s brands to explore new content opportunities, including short- and long-form formats for each Onion brand across digital and linear mediums."

The partnership was first reported by US broadcaster National Public Radio.

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