

# In online first, 'exploding watermelon' takes the cake

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In an online world where viral trends can shift in an instant, the "exploding watermelon" video may have set a high-water mark.

The digital news site BuzzFeed on Friday showed just how quickly a mindless act can gain notoriety, using Facebook's new live [video service](#) for an event in which its team placed elastic bands around the melon until it exploded.

The spectacle quickly gathered steam on social media, and at one point more than 800,000 people were viewing live, waiting for the [watermelon](#) to explode.

Moments later, the cached video had more than 4.4 million views and generated over 314,000 comments on Facebook.

"I want to stop watching so bad but I'm already committed," one Facebook user wrote.

"When my husband comes home and asks me what I did today, I'm not certain he will understand how I couldn't stop once I started," another said.

The live event featured BuzzFeed's Chelsea Marshall and James Harness in hazmat suits placing rubber bands one by one around the watermelon's middle, counting out each time.

On Twitter, #watermelon become a top trend.

"More people are watching this than CNN right now," one person tweeted.

BuzzFeed unabashedly promoted the event, tweeting: "The @BuzzFeedNews team is currently monitoring the imminent explosion of a watermelon. Stay tuned for the latest."

The video showed a crowd around the watermelon cheering when the count passed 400 rubber bands.

"Can someone share this to my personal Facebook in case I die?" Harness said during the event.

With tension rising at BuzzFeed, the watermelon began spewing juice at 660 rubber bands until its top blew off at 690 to a round of cheers, followed by a partaking of the fruit inside.

But the buzz continued even after the live event.

"The year is 2030," journalist Bobby Blanchard tweeted, "and my son asks 'Daddy where were you when @BuzzFeed exploded a watermelon with rubber bands as 700,000 people watched on?'"

Analysts meanwhile looked for lessons for struggling news media organizations.

"Livestreams are stories, just like any other content generated by a news organization," said Benjamin Mullin of the Poynter Institute in a blog post.

"At their best, they should have a beginning, middle and end—ideally

one that elicits an emotional reaction from the viewer. And, if possible, they should include an element of uncertainty to sustain the audience's interest."

Mullin said it's not clear if this feat can be duplicated, but that "newsroom managers might be wise to figure out how they can apply today's lessons to their own coverage."

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