M agazine readers in India have never had it so good. While names like Cosmopolitan, Seventeen and Time Out have been in the market for long, many new niche magazines from the West are launching their desi versions and grabbing eyeballs.

“Indian market is quite unlike the West, therefore, publishing houses have to tweak their marketing strategies and do things differently,” says Tanya Kapadia, CEO of id8 Media Solutions, the PR agency that launched names like Rolling Stone & Hello! magazines in India.

US-based Hello! Magazine set up shop in India around early 2007. In addition to the local rivals, the magazine had to compete with the year old OK!, a British magazine that made its Indian foray in 2006.

Hello! marketed itself well amongst its selected number of high profile readers, as an attempt to penetrate into its primary reader base that consisted of industrialists, celebrities, famous socialites, the magazine in turn published their exclusive photographs in the first few issues of the magazine. On the other hand, OK! in tie up with VJM Media house gave away Kurtas designed by the likes of Tarun Tahiliani and more for 2 subscribers every month.

Rolling Stone redefined the idea of ‘launching with a bang’ by launching its 1st Indian edition with not one, not two but as many as five different cover pages. From Heartland rocker Bruce Springsteen to soul & jazz singer Amy Winehouse, from rapper Jay-Z to sitar whiz Anoushka Shankar, the launch made its wide audience base pretty clear. Rumour has it that were talks of Saif Ali Khan gracing one of the covers for his knack to play the guitar but that remained a distant reality. Vogue on the other hand, although what appeared more like Bollywood movie premiere, the evening blended the India’s cultural heritage & global fashion with the launch party hosted at Taj Umaid Bhavan Palace in Jodhpur.

Foreign media companies have realised the growth of the Indian media and its potential to attract readers for their monthly periodicals. The rising number of English speaking people and higher purchasing power has encouraged international publications to launch their Indian versions. “Even if the magazines are full of fluff, people won’t mind picking them up because it’s what they dream of!” says Reshma Kulkarni, a freelance writer for magazines like Cosmopolitan and New Woman.

Moreover, alongwith the glossy overture and exquisite photography, foreign magazines attract readers with their bold content that had been kept under wraps for years. “The content is more real. They write about what’s happening rather than discussing the past, like Femina does. Femina often seems like an Ekta Kapoor serial. Most articles are rigged just to increase readership than actually being educating,” says Nihar Mehta, 35 year old who prefers reading Cosmopolitan over Femina.

“International magazines coming to India is a good thing. But it’s probably a bubble, like the internet bubble, it will eventually burst,” maintains Abhishek Mande, Entertainment Correspondent/Sub Editor for Buzz 18, an avid reader of international magazines but feels that circulation and advertising revenues need to peak up to be able to sustain in the market.

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