

a south Asian perspective. What started as a hobbyist's idea gathered momentum.

In January 2002, Redhotcurry.com was featured as Yahoo's website of the week and it grew exponentially. "In the fourth quarter of 2002 we had 63,627 page impressions per month. By the fourth quarter of 2008 this had risen to 400,000 page impressions per month," says Patel.

Three years later, an e-commerce section was added to the site, selling ethnic products such as

"THE EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION THAT THE SITE HAS GIVEN ME COULD NOT BE RIVALLED"

henna cones and body paint. This, along with advertising sales, is starting to generate income. "There is a glimmer that we might make a profit this year," says Patel, who cashed in an endowment policy to finance Redhotcurry.com and has sunk £130,000 of her savings into it.

Patel completed funding rounds in the first year, but she says this happened before the explosion of social media and nobody wanted to put money into an Asian diaspora website then. "I may never get my investment back, but the emotional satisfaction that Redhotcurry has given me could not be rivalled."

She wants to expand the portal to include a wider set of Asian communities. "People want me to start doing outreach sort of work, which is an odd position to be in because when does a business become a campaigning organisation?" Patel believes that Asian people are under-represented. "They want their stories told, but they also want something done about it. So I'm thinking about what I can add to this."

The businesswoman says her proudest moment was being awarded an MBE this year for services to digital media, the championing of entrepreneurship and for supporting the South Asian community here. If she could do it all over again, Patel says she would have tried to change her "hobbyist" mindset earlier and put a lot more money into the site rather than trying to fund it in a piecemeal fashion.

"This would have given it a more business-focused approach earlier and it might have then turned a profit much quicker. Hindsight is a wonderful thing," she says.

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IF I'VE LEARNED ONE THING
The French wine trade likes innovation



Grape crusader: Crushpad clients can be closely involved in making wine, says Stephen Bolger

As anyone who has tried to make it themselves can confirm, quality wine rarely comes from amateurs. It takes skill, dedication and lots of money. At least it did before Crushpad came along.

The brainchild of a San Francisco wine lover, Crushpad allows individuals or groups of friends to produce their own top-quality wines. Now the firm has ventured to the "old world" with the arrival of Crushpad Bordeaux.

Being half-American and half-French, Stephen Bolger was the obvious choice to lead the new firm. Bolger says that despite being traditional, the wine community in Bordeaux is open to innovation. "People here have

taken an interest. The growers are curious about what we're doing.

"This year we have 150 clients making 40 barrels of wine. These are wine lovers from all across the world who know what they like and are happy to experiment."

With support and guidance from Crushpad's experts, clients can be as hands-on as they like. Most have a clear idea what they want. This has included blending cabernet sauvignon grapes from Margaux with merlot from St Emilion. "It may upset some, but it's an intelligent approach to wine-making," says Bolger.

With a barrel costing £8,000, it's also one for wealthy individuals or groups of friends.

"Consumers did the Aldi and Lidl thing, and eventually thought, how much longer do I have to do this for?"

Waitrose's Mark Price says sales of premium-priced foods are rising as we grow tired of slumming it

"Why say something meaningful to a few people I care about, when I can say virtually nothing to everyone"

Ouch! Jerry Seinfeld takes a shot at the Twitterati

"The food price volatility of last year will look like a vicar's tea party"

With oil past its peak in 2029, says Andrew Simms at the New Economics Foundation, our food supply will be the yardstick

"All sorts of things are embodied in Lego... geometry and maths, truth and proportion, shape and colour"

Top Gear presenter James May gets emotional about little plastic toys