

Host

Baba ka Dhaba – this name swept the social media off its feet last week, netizens came out to support the owners of this dhaba an elderly couple, after they saw a video of how they're losing customers due to the pandemic, and they were unable to earn a living. The heartfelt video showing the stall went viral on the internet. Today, Baba ka Dhaba is listed on zomato for online food delivery. It doesn't stop there, a street vendor in Agra, another one in Kerala, run by a lady also received several hands of help to boost their business. I asked Karthik Srinivasan, Communication Strategy Consultant, Social Media Expert and award-winning Blogger, his views on this.

Host

Hi Karthik. You must have seen a lot of positive action sort to speak on social media about street vendors. And it started with Baba ka Dhaba. So, what do you have in, you know, is this something that that's just you know, one of like a sporadic kind of a thing, the positive reinforcement of social media? Is it something that is here to stay? How do you see this?

Karthik

One, I wouldn't say this is anything new at all completely, because positive or negative, are just two sides of the same coin. The one thing that is happening here, which is similar to all the negative things that are happening in the past, also in the recent past or earlier past also is that this is something that transcended from being only remaining with an online platform or a few online platforms to offline action. There was offline action. So, people took action consciously offline, which means they have to leave their house, they have to take their device with them, wear a mask, go out on the road and do something about it, instead of just sitting at home and saying I like I play type a comment or ha ha or whatever it is, it is very easy to do, clicking on things and saying a few very easy to do a dime a dozen all over the place. But to get them out and do something is a big deal. But it's exactly the same thing with the negativity also. For instance, when you look at when you look at the violence, or when you look at the action that is being taken on ground when fake news spreads on WhatsApp, for instance, when villagers come to know that two new people have come to the village and they have come to kidnap their children, kinds of stuff that spreads on WhatsApp like to come in like wildfire. And there is a choice for people. It could remain on WhatsApp, the platform, people will say Who the hell is the alert, be cautious, blah, blah, or people could go out on the road and inflict violence upon those two hapless people who have nothing to do with child care, whatever it is. So that is a negative offline impact. This is a positive offline impact. But the threat is very same. It started online that people actually piled on it, people read it people shared it became viral. And then it's transcending into action offline, whether it's positive or negative. That's just up in there basically. Because even this positive thing could completely change if somebody influential ask this Baba ka Dhaba owner about his political views and that goes on line the whole thing will completely topple depending on which political side or issue. So, the whole thing will completely topple and crash completely correct.

Host –

Yeah. So, you know, that's a very interesting, you know, observation what you made in terms of online and offline sort of coming together. And conversations happen online, but action happens offline, right? Now, unfortunately, for probably every positive such action, we do see, you know, multitudes of negative kind of, you know, news or action, right? I mean, these days. So, how does one strike a balance? Because, do you see this trend of positivity getting more and more or do you see that, you know, the negative side of things would be much more than the positive side?

Karthik - That depends tentatively on the emotion that the news piece evoke. What kind of emotion there is evoked in people, for instance, there are some extreme emotions, like anger is an extreme emotion? What do you feel anger towards, for instance, if I'm very passionate about Bollywood industry, and I am very angry about the kind of insinuations being thrown at the Bollywood industry, that they are all this, they are all because of the recent news and etc. I will be very angry because I'm very passionate follower of Bollywood, people who would I do something about it, I don't have a specific action to do offline. For instance, if everything is directed towards saying come outside Mannat house and then say good things about Shahrukh Khan or whatever it is, then that's a very specific call to action like an advertisement. Go to this website and buy or go to this offline store and buy. In this case, the positivity was channel like a funnel towards one call to action, go to Baba ka Dhaba and order and buy food. That's a very tangible action. If there was no one action and say, here are 50 numbers that you can go and buy, it will all precipitate in a few different directions and you won't see a tangible outcome which everybody can celebrate at all. That's the problem. Most of the negative things also have very specific call to action that is a perpetrator, they need to go and attack them offline, or there is, whatever is happening, go and attack them offline. very specific. Also, the more specific the call to action in the viral news, the more specific the action is likely to be.

Host

We're taking a short break; we'll continue our conversation with Karthik Srinivasan.

Host

Welcome back. We are in conversation with Karthik Srinivasan. You know, on the voting day, a lot of people, you know, keep showing there, you know, mark on the finger that I've gone and voted and all that stuff. And despite that, you're saying that people don't get motivated to go out and vote right?

Karthik

Because, there is no emotional remedy, it is just FOMO they are showing thing. Yeah, I have done it too. But what did you gain is there a tangible result that you gained as a result of showing that thing? Nothing at all after two weeks? Somebody will win? Yeah, big deal there is there is no I mean, the fact is that if you go to a Baba ka Dhaba and eat, and you see that owners happy face and smiling phase or crying and happiness kind of feel you feel warmth inside your dance. Similarly, with a negative, you go out and eat somebody and kill somebody, their head breaks up, oh, wow, I am happy to continue on with whatever happens. So, you get a good takeaway. I mean, whether it's good or bad, it's up to the person, you get a tangible takeaway that you can see and do about it with voting you don't get anything at all. You go there, you get your hand inked and you come back home jobs, and there's nothing.

Host

Okay. So that brings me to the you know, my last point, which is around, you know, a lot of times Facebook, I mean, not just Facebook, any social media is about these days has become more about, you know, negativity, trolls, fake news, all those kinds of things. Now, do you think a kind of regulation will help it to be a lot more positive and productive? What's your view on regulation?

Karthik

Regulation is probably needed. And I say this in a very cautious tone, because there is no meaningful way to regulate anything at all. You argue for regulation of one thing, people will argue for regulation of other things, there is no end to it. The whole thing will come crashing down. So that's obviously there. But there are things that are obviously bad for people, for instance, inciting instigating pain, against specific people or specific culture purpose, because religion makes up that's called bigotry, and that is bad. And we have seen historically, bigotry leads to problems. I mean, when I say problems with a very mildly, it leads to far worse things and problems that I say. So, if it is bad, and if somebody's proudly showcasing their bigotry, that is a problem that needs to be nipped in the bud before it can go viral and pollute mind. Because, my thumb rule is like this, would I say something online that I would not tell my children or my mother or my wife? I won't say that online, either. But online, you say that because you talk to strangers, you're not talking to your children, you're not talking to a mother or your wife. But you still go ahead and say that, why don't we exercise the same caution that I won't tell my children or my mother or wife online? Because if somebody else children, somebody else wife and somebody else mother, they can go to hell, I don't care. But my family, I want to protect. I won't do that at all. If you use that gauge saying, if I won't tell this to my own children, why would they say that online, things will be much better. But people don't exercise caution. They need to be told to exercise caution somehow. I don't know how what kind of regulation but regulation would help in negativity not spreading like wildfire. Positivity spreading like wildfire is good for everybody. But negativity spreading like wildfire has phenomenal repercussions in us as a society. And we are living in that society unfortunately.

Host - Yeah, thanks, Karthik. Thanks a lot for your time.