

Alia Bhatt: From Hell and Back

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I. Alia Bhatt: From Hell and Back

Social media refers to a collection of internet based applications that not only provide information but also enables interactions among people where they generate, share, and/or exchange information and ideas.

According to Nielsen, internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 compared to 66 billion minutes in July 2011. ⁽¹⁾ In November 2011, it was reported Indians spend more time on social media than on any other activity on the Internet. ⁽²⁾ Social media platforms have a potential to make or break journey of a corporate, a brand or a celebrity. One such celebrity, who learned what impact social media platforms can have on life in hard way is Alia Bhatt.

II. Alia's Rise to Stardom

At the age of 6 Alia Bhatt starred in Sangharsh as a child artist. At an adolescent age of 19 her debut movie Student of the Year was released grossing ₹70 Cr domestically. She was nominated as "Best Female Debut" for awards like Zee Cine Awards and Filmfare Awards. Her popularity in the Bollywood circle led to three movie releases in first half of 2014 of which 2 states emerged as a major commercial success earning over ₹100 Cr in domestic ticket sales. ⁽³⁾

In 2014, Alia launched her own line of clothing for women, in association with the online fashion portal Jabong.com; she described the collection to be "very simple" and "very me". ⁽⁴⁾ She is the ambassador of popular brands such as Coca-Cola, Garnier and Maybelline. ⁽⁵⁾ Considering her fan following amongst the youth she appeared on popular talk shows one of them being 'Koffee with Karan'.

III. Alia's Journey to Emotional Hell

During her interview when asked who the President of India is, Alia promptly replied with Prithviraj Chavan mixing up the Chief Minister of Maharashtra with the President of India. On another occasion when asked the full form of BJP she did nothing but awkwardly smile at the host. ⁽⁶⁾

In the movie 2 states she portrayed a role of an IIM A graduate with aces throughout her academic career which was in sharp contrast to her real life display of her general knowledge in the show 'Koffee with Karan', which became a major talking point. Soon after this, a number of jokes started circulating in the social media ridiculing Alia's general knowledge. The most common platform used for the same was Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. Alia Bhatt was now receiving quite a bit of attention on social media, in the entertainment industry, any publicity is good publicity; however, in this case it was a lot more personal (refer *exhibit 1*). Now, Alia's conundrum was how to change this negative sentiment about herself and turn this gamut of negative publicity into an image building positive sentiment. *Exhibit 2* shows the trend for the search string "Alia Bhatt Jokes" over internet and bottom chart shows popularity of "Alia Bhatt" over internet, clearly showing that both the peaks converge.

IV. Comeback Mechanisms

There were three choices available with Alia at this point in time when negative publicity / mocking jokes were at their peak.

Option 1: Do Nothing

This scenario meant continue with business as usual and let the negative publicity run rampant. This scenario would have definitely helped Alia stay in the limelight, but at the same time made it stressful for her and could have translated into a state of self-apathy.

Option 2: Use Traditional Media

Alia could have used traditional media such as television and newspapers to reach out to the masses in order to make an appeal to them to reduce/ stop the personal attack on her in form of jokes; however, this would have been an expensive affair considering the time that would have been required to change the public image through appearances on television channels and giving interviews to newspapers.

Option 3: Leverage Social Media

As social media was being used as a communication medium for negative publicity, Alia could think of leveraging the same in order to get back at perpetrators behind the jokes. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp can be used in order to reach out to the masses and at the same time make it for an interesting viewing experience for her fans.

V. Back From Hell: Social Media Gods Bless Alia

In this new age of social media, Alia chose option 3 and posted a video on YouTube (refer exhibit 3). The video was a satire on how she transforms from a dumb girl into a "genius of the year". The video made a quick connect with the audiences and garnered 5 million views in 12 days. With this video she changed the tides and the negative sentiment that was associated with Alia Bhatt's intelligence and general knowledge reduced considerably (refer exhibit 2), proving that social media can be double edged sword, if used rightly can bring heaven to life or if wrongly used throw you to perils of hell.

VI. Inspiration To Corporate

Social media plays an important role in breaking and making of an image of a brand. Be it actors, politicians or product brands. However, if effectively used, corporate can turn the tide in their favor by effective use of social media. For instance, customers write reviews to a restaurant on zomato.com which is replied by the respective restaurant manager in order to ensure customer engagement, customer satisfaction, repeat business and through the networking effect based on social media engagement additional business from their friends and family.

Exhibit 1



Exhibit 2

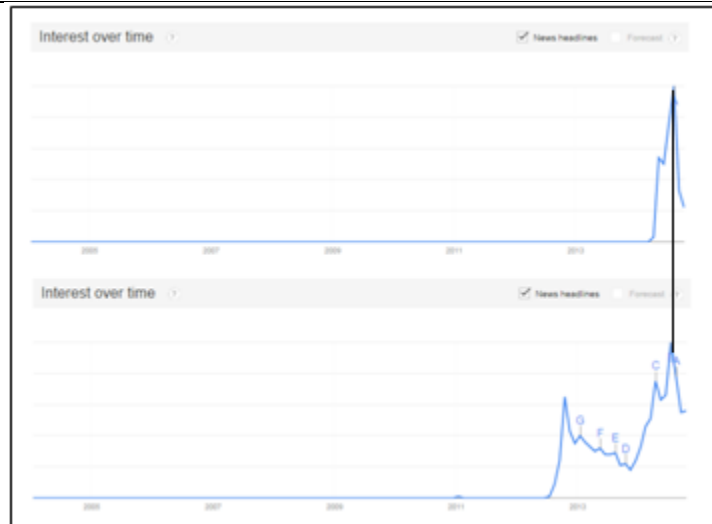


Exhibit 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfHxl46KyZM>

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