



# SOCIAL NETWORK

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR HAS CHANGED AND EVOLVED DURING THE PAST YEAR AND IS LIKELY TO DIVERSIFY FURTHER, SAYS NIVI SHRIVASTAVA

**W**e've all grown up listening to stories about the "big change" that will one day alter the world we live in. Interestingly, this much-rumoured change doesn't happen overnight – it's a never-ending process that never ceases to stop. As I write about the changing social behaviour in 2017, I wonder where to begin — the year gone by was a remarkable year in so many ways. From finance, politics, entertainment, sports and technology — almost every field went through a transition and left a visible impact on our society directly or indirectly. Amid the potpourri of key events that shaped 2017, what stood out clearly was the change in social behaviour – the humane angle, heavily influenced by social media, and how it led us to believe things that we wouldn't have ever considered otherwise.



**N**ot only did social media change our outlook in so many ways, it also created the need for digital validation from our friends and family at every stage. Whether we were travelling, eating, partying or dating someone – everything was shared with everyone through stories, snaps and status messages. In the hospitality sector, the new deciding factor was the rise and rise of "instagrammable food" and Facebook-worthy check-ins. Anjali Batra, Founder, Food Talk India, mentions, "For the longest time, food had become a trend. It wasn't about what you were putting into your mouth; it was about what where you were and what it looked like on a plate. We started living in the world of 'plate to Instagram' and it was influencing all hospitality trends. However, in 2017 people were not just blindly following a

## DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS WITH EVERY CLICK



trend but begin to ask for more. From exploring the local seasonal produce and customised dining experience, people have now started for more real deals. The

new-age consumer is looking for not just meals but is keen to invest in beautiful experiences. People constantly write to us about doing more regional experiences and request a historical menu to experience food with a soul."

Minakshi Singh, co-owner Speakeasy, Cocktails and Dreams, feels the biggest changes in the hospitality industry were the recognition and acknowledgment of bartenders, chefs and the workforce behind the industry. She says, "The quality of service and standard has gone up a lot and, I hope in 2018 we get to see more of quality bars, good service and use of local ingredients. To be in the industry, you cannot fake it anymore as people ask for real stuff and are willing to pay for a good experience."

## EVERYBODY IS TRENDING

**O**ne of the biggest game changers in 2017 was definitely technology that played a vital role in creating mass hysteria even when things were blown out of proportion. It was assumed earlier that the world of social media attracted the young and tech-savvy more, but in 2017 the shift from younger to older generation was a noticeable trend. Not only millennials, their parents and grandparents were also actively adapting to new-age digital playgrounds – thus, the virtual population almost grew exponentially in the past year and is expected to be bigger in 2018.

In 2017, everything that mattered was "trending" on all social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and even made headlines as evidenced by the success of the #MeToo campaigns. If a cause wasn't a popular hashtag it wasn't big enough, hence everything was customised to cater to the digital media audience. Manisha Rao, Founder, TheLuxecafe.com, points out, "Videos were huge in 2017. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg already did his best to transform his medium into a video platform, and following his footsteps other players like Snapchat, Whatsapp, Instagram, Youtube also jumped the bandwagon. Now even LinkedIn has started promoting videos by the influencers, which should diversify more in 2018. From video-integrating periscopes to live streaming platforms via apps – social media was flooded with videos and clips."

## REEL VS REAL LIFE: EXPLORING VIRTUAL BONDS

**W**hile online dating saw a sudden spike in 2017, apps that promised to connect hearts were a sort of rage among the young and old. With the changing social norms, the stigma of meeting someone online phased out and many relationships evolved over phone chats and video calls – something that our parents still refuse to believe in. As Gautam Seth, designer at Klove, puts it, "I think with less concentration time in all our minds and lives, quick gratification is the basis where most situations start, continue or even end abruptly. These days, romance lies with a chosen lucky few."

On the other hand, in the entertainment world, the digital boom was all about publicity – right or wrong, no one cared much if it was "viral." Actor Tahir Anand mentions that the digital platform was explored the most for celebrity interactions, movie promotions and creating a buzz around a release. He says, "With the advent of the digital revolution, people had an option to view content for a nominal fee. In 2018, a lot of work will be seen happening in the form of web series and short films. This will not, however, reduce the viewership of movie buffs. This year, a lot of movies addressed social issues which we knew existed but no one was willing to speak about, for example, *Toilet – Ek Prem Katha* (on the need for sanitation), *Shubh Mangal Savdhan* (on erectile dysfunction) *Secret Superstar* (on a conservatively-bred girl's desire to be a commercial singer) and *Tumhari Sulu* (about an average middle-class woman turning into a late-night RJ). Real stories with real problems were what people could relate to."

Speaking about 2018 predictions, actor and director Udit Ohri predicts that the number of entrants in the entertainment industry is expected to grow in the coming years as the scope for good content via digital media has gone up. He says, "Newer self-funded production houses and trained actors were quite popular in 2017. The opportunities have increased for actors and filmmakers. Since the entertainment industry is very competitive, and not everybody can thrive in here, I see a paradigm shift in people wanting to reconsider their career choices, as only very few will be able to survive. Of course, there is an increased level of professionalism but since the career is highly erratic, it's a 'perform or perish' situation for most businesses. Even for production houses, if they don't churn out good stuff, they might lose the audience forever. So ultimately you have to be good at what you do, that's the only way forward."

While hopes and aspirations for 2018 continue to grow in every sector, the constant process of evolution with time will keep everyone occupied. After all, change is the only constant that will drive us into a better future.

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