Development initiatives and Social Media Interventions: A Study of Telangana State

Rasu Chatrapathi Yadav
Assistant Professor,
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication
Osmania University Post Graduate College,
Siddipet, Telangana State 502103

Abstract

Developmental projects (irrigation, infrastructure and welfare) launched on a massive scale for speedy progress of Telangana state involves bottlenecks like land acquisition, environment clearance, displacement, rehabilitation, relief, shortage of funds and prioritization attracting protests from affected populace. These include flagship projects i.e., Mission Bhagiratha, supply of safe drinking water to households and Mission Kakatiya, to ensure irrigated water to all land holdings by restoring lakes. Government has to tread carefully to convince stakeholders about larger interests involved in these projects and a information campaign using social media platform, creating Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp accounts for chief minister office (CMO) and other important departments was launched to educate and motivate people to participate in development process. A direct two-way communication was established with stakeholders and information transmitted using mobile technology. Few applications have become popular like MyGHMC and RTA's m-Wallet. This paper examines government's success in using Social Networking Sites in educating people and employing an effective feedback channel. Did the government's initiatives reduce confrontation? Has social media campaign created positive image among public about schemes initiated? Content generated by government's social media and the feedback it received is taken as secondary source and its effective has been studied by comparing it with reports appeared in mainstream media. From addressing/resolving minor civic issues to dispelling misinformation campaigns on major projects, SNSs became an effective redressal mechanism.

Keywords: Development, Displacement, Mission Bhagiratha, Social Media, Telangana

Introduction

Developmental activities have been undertaken on a massive scale in the newly formed state of Telangana to quell people's anguish over backwardness. Focus has been shifted to building infrastructure, improving irrigation facility and strengthening lakes apart from welfare schemes. Two major projects have become

prestigious for the government i.e., Mission Bhagiratha and Mission Kakatiya. While Mission Bhagiratha is meant to construct small and medium irrigation projects to pump water using lift system to all uplands to provide irrigated water to agricultural fields and supply safe drinking water to all households, Mission Kakatiya was to strengthen tank irrigation by restoring thousands of defunct lakes.

Several welfare programmes were launched for the uplift of different sections and it has become pertinent for the government to inform its public the long term benefits involved with the works undertaken. In this process, media's role is even more crucial as it disseminates information, making people understand policies and schemes of the government. Several issues will emerge in developmental initiatives which include introduction of new technology. As far as urban and rural populace is concerned, the major concern is the introduction of information and communication technology so as to make administration process easy.

Aims and Objectives

The present paper looks into the usage of information technology by incumbent government in effectively disseminating information about schemes/programmes launched for different sections of people. Effectively utilizing the IT enabled services available in abundance in the capital city of Hyderabad, the government launched a series of measures in making technology more viable in developmental process. Apart from launching T-Hub to attract investments, and providing a single platform for establishing startups for budding entrepreneurs, the government has started a single window system in clearing files for the sanction and setting up of infrastructure projects. It has also launched several social media applications to ease the process of administration and to have relations with the people which it is serving. Taking this into consideration the present paper has the following objectives

1. How government utilized social media platforms to provide proper space for its visibility and availability of services to people at their doorsteps.
2. To study social media applications launched to improve various services to the people i.e., transport, health, education, ration, employment and farming sector.
3. To study the utility of these applications and performance and their uses in improving the living standard and in providing better services to people.

Theoretical Framework

The information and communication technology plays a crucial role in information process using computers and mobile devices. Social media is an important component of ICT using latest social networking sites like

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and so on. The present paper uses the theories of sustainable development, transfer of technology and diffusion of innovations.

Methodology

Taking secondary data as the source of data collection, the present study tries to take information appeared in news stories and in public domain and study the various social media applications launched by the Telangana government as part of its move to ease the administrative process thereby helping in the development process.

Social Media and its initiatives

Social media is defined as the media designed to disseminate information through social interaction using accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media is a media designed to disseminate information through social interaction using accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media uses Internet and web-based technologies to transform broadcast media monologues (one-to-many) into social media dialogues (many-to-many). It supports democratization of knowledge and information, transforming people from content consumers into content producers.

T Wallet

As part of Digital India initiative by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at Centre to encourage digital transactions and avoid cash transactions, the Telangana government has launched T-Wallet i.e., an anytime anywhere digital payment option for everyone, on June 1, 2017, wherein citizens with or without smart phones (using Mee Seva Centres) can open T Wallet, load money into it and make payments for availed government and private services. T Wallet is integrated with Mee Seva centres, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB), Road Transport Authority (RTA), Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL), Telangana State Northern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSNPDCL) and Civil Supplies ePOS (Avadhuta, 2017). Efforts are on to integrate T Wallet service to Aasara pension, MGNREGS payment and link all 16,000 fair price shops and 1,100 streenidhi BC points situated in the state.

Mana TV: Education at doorsteps

On education front, the government is using latest technology to ensure that remote regions have access to teaching facility. Digital classes were introduced in government, municipal and panchayat schools, spending huge funds. Mana TV, an exclusive education channel was introduced to impart lectures of eminent persons/experts on various subjects. Videos of lectures of subject experts are uploaded on the mana tv website

softnet.telangana.gov.in. Society for Telangana State Network (SoFTNET) is introduced by the government of Telangana under the Department of Information and Techonolgy, Electronics and Communication to provide quality education using the satellite communications and information technology. It has four channels

TSPSC: A role model in recruitment

The Telangana State Public Service Commission has been in forefront in making service commission more job-seeker friendly by launchintroducing the One Time Registration (OTR) wherein unemployed need to register only once to apply for any job. The data available would be utilized for future notifications. This has been made possible with the synchronization of Aadhaar card number of job aspirants. Also online written tests are being conducted if the strength of applicants is confined to thousands.

Telangana along with Rajasthan bagged the Computer Society of India's Nilekani eGovernance award for excellence under the state category out of the 180 nominations received for various projects this year (Line, 2017).

My GHMC Application

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation launched mobile application (app) MyGHMC App for smartphone mobile users to access some important services offered on July 15, 2016. The application is managed by the Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad. The available services include payment of property tax, trade licence fee, view status of Layout regularization scheme (LRS) applications, downloading of birth and death certificates and submission of civic related complaints like manholes, potholes, open dumping, streetlights etc. Within 50 days of the launch of the app, nearly one lakh downloaded it from 19 countries surpassing the metropolitan cities in the number of downloads and reviews with New Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai having downloads of less than 10,000 while Mumbai municipal corporation app being downloaded between 20,000 and 50,000 (Singh, 2016). Most of the downloads are related to birth certificates (54257), grievances (11048), property tax (1,336), death certificates (6,835), trade licence fee (144) and others. It has a competitor in Surat mnunicipal corporation app which has been downloaded and used by lakhs of citizens after it launch three years ago (Devulapalli, 2016) The major problem is uploading the photographs related to the grievances. Photographs need to be uploaded immediately after taking the snaps and not from the gallery. There are also complaints of closing the docket numbers before resolving the grievance which is not a welcome sign. Also the number of circles have not been updated even after increased in its number. Every month Swachch ranking is given to one circle based on cleanliness.

Mosquito App

To create awareness among people of Hyderabad to control dengue and mosquito menace, GHMC has come up with an exclusive mobile application, GHMC Mosquito App, and introduced a contest wherein lucky draw would be conducted every month to select 100 eligible persons who has correctly upload answers in the form of yes or no and a cash prize of Rs 1000 each would be given them (Vasireddy, 2017). It has got a total reviews of 696 with 4.7 rating while 569 has rated it as five star, 77 four star, 22 three star, seven two star and 21 has given single star rating. Several of the smartphone users who had downloaded this application has

The GHMC also started a twitter account GHMC@GHMCOnline in 2015 with 27,700 followers. Out of the total 2693 reviews available on the app 1584 have given five star rating, 452 four star, 236 three star, 125 two star and 296 one star with the overall rating being 4.1 star.

RTA m-Wallet

On March 30, 2016, the transport department of Telangana government launched RTA m-Wallet, a digital wallet to store all documents related to the road transport authority department. Motorists should downloaded the application on their smartphones, register using their name and phone number and it would automatically connect to the transport department and all the digital documents related to driving licence, registration certificates, pollution control and insurance will be downloaded into the application and the same could be shown to the police. This helps motorist avoid physically carrying the documents and chances of loss. The application has total reviews of 16,734 with a rating of 3.9. A total of 8495 has rated it with five stars, 3335 four stars, 2023 three stars, 906 two stars and 1975 with single star rating.

This measure of the transport department helps in avoiding taking printouts of documents and physically carrying them, thereby helping in protecting environment and curbing misplacement or theft. There is a huge response to the application and the only hitch is that the app is only for people with TS driving licences and not even for those having old licences from the region.

Conclusion

The present study shows that the introduction of social networking sites would assist to a certain extent in the developmental process and it would concretely help in maintaining a dialogue between the government and its people and helps in improving the services. The major handicap is the lack of monitoring on the social media networking for keeping a tab on the posts.

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