



## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Definition of Social Media .....	4
What are its components .....	4
Impact of social media.....	5
Egypt Revolution .....	5
Japan Tsunami .....	5
Use of social media in Organisations.....	6
Using Social media in District Administration .....	7
Citizen Interaction.....	7
Citizen engagement .....	8
Grievance redressal.....	8
Collaboration and Policy Feedback.....	8
The way forward.....	9
Defining the Objectives .....	9
Choosing the Platform .....	9
Governance Structures .....	10
Response and Responsiveness of the Social Media establishment.....	10
Allocation of Resources.....	10
Accountability .....	10
Content creation, moderation and archival .....	10
Address Legal Compliance issues .....	10
Fresh perspective required .....	11
Conclusion.....	11

## Introduction

It is the basic premise of this paper that Government at all levels need to be proactive in adopting to Social Media. Wherever people meet, connect, interact, share news and views and form opinions which influence their actions, the Government has a stake. The Government needs to be there to listen to the conversation, provide information and if necessary influence the conversations to clarify its position and engage the Citizens.

Engagement has been understood and explained in a variety of ways. Engagement as

- Contributor
- Organisation builder
- Empowering process
- Combination of all the above

Politically, the meaning is inevitably linked to the relationship between the citizens and the state institutions.

However, mostly, citizens are often considered either as beneficiaries of government welfare programmes or in PPP<sup>i</sup> terminology referred to as customers, neither of which truly reflects the government-citizen relationship.

While the impact of Social Media on the Citizens life is well accepted the engagement of Citizens via Social Media by Governments is not commensurate.

This paper attempts to evolve an approach to the use of social media in District Administration. Acceptance of social media is increasing in Government. But the approach is more top-down and is not percolating to lower levels where it's more pertinent and where the cutting edge of the Governance happens.

The papers aims to highlight the context social media can play in District Administration, key concerns to look at from Government perspective and some ways to think forward.

## **Definition of Social Media**

Social media refers to all internet web applications that enable information sharing and collaboration.

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Social media are media for social interaction, as a superset beyond social communication. Enabled by ubiquitously accessible and scalable communication techniques, social media substantially change the way of communication between organizations, communities, as well as individuals.

With their ease of access and participation, social media provides a podium to millions of individuals today to express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, sentiments, interests and so on, exceedingly easily; virtually anytime, anywhere. Social media systems have thereby generalized the conventional notion of a hyperlink to imply connections between individuals in particular, via their shared content, media and concepts.

## **What are its components**

Social media take on many different forms, including Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. By applying a set of theories in the field of media research (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure) Kaplan and Haenlein created a classification scheme for different social media types in their Business Horizons article published in 2010.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein there are six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. Youtube), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life).

Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowdsourcing, and voice over IP, to name a few. Many of these social media services can be integrated via social network aggregation platforms.

## **Impact of social media**

### **Egypt Revolution**

Social Media like Facebook and Twitter did not create the revolution. But these tools did speed up the process by helping to organize the revolutionaries, transmit their message to the world and galvanize international support.

In the same way that pamphlets didn't cause the American Revolution, social media didn't cause the Egyptian revolution," said Sascha Meinrath, director of the New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative.

"Social media have become the pamphlets of the 21st century, a way that people who are frustrated with the status quo can organize themselves and coordinate protest, and in the case of Egypt, revolution."<sup>ii</sup>

Facebook helped to organize the activists inside the country, he said, while Twitter functioned to help get the message out to the broader world.

### **Japan Tsunami**

A powerful 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck the coast of Japan, causing widespread power outages, fires and a severe tsunami that was reported to be up to 10 meters high in places. It was the seventh most powerful earthquake in recorded history.

The reaction on Twitter, quickly becoming the go-to service in emergencies, was immediate and intense. Less than an hour after the quake, with the country's phone system knocked out, the number of tweets coming from Tokyo were topping 1,200 per minute, according to [Tweet-o-Meter](#). A twitter account was also dedicated for Tsunami updates. (<http://twitter.com/tsunamiupdate>)

Twitter users shared the tsunami's estimated times of arrival on U.S. shores<sup>iii</sup>—before an official government tsunami warning went into effect. The wave was expected to hit Hawaii first, at roughly 3 a.m. local time.

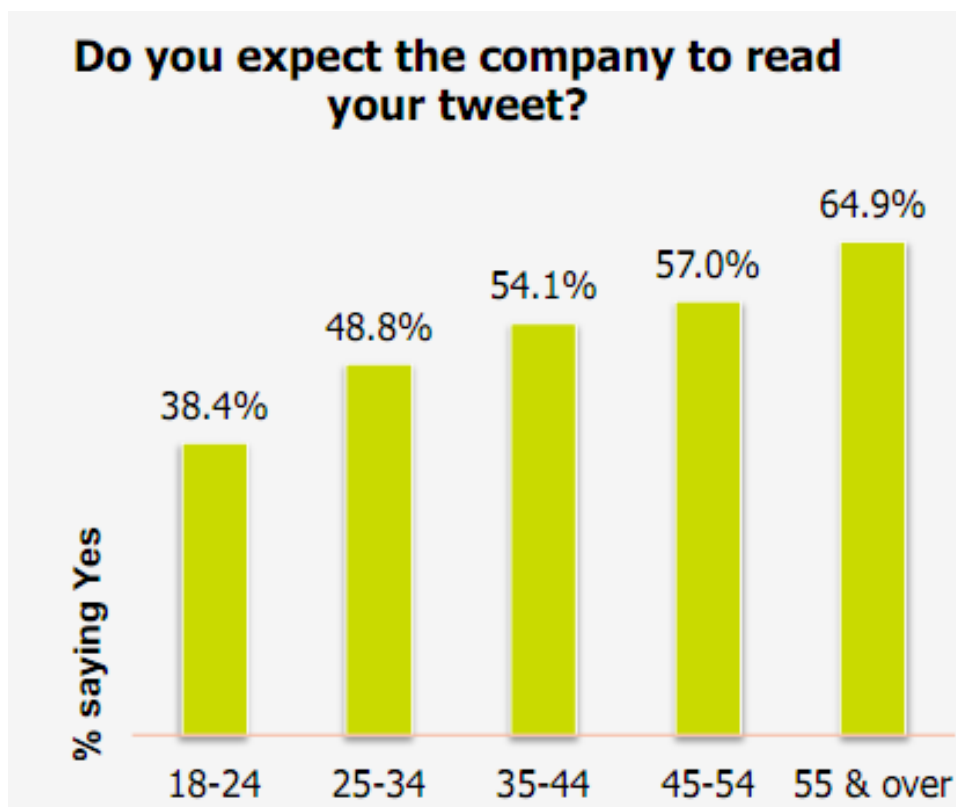
Google's official feed posted a link to the Japanese version of its People Finder<sup>iv</sup>, for loved ones who have been separated.

Its clear that social media is not a creator but a propagator. The essential quality of media is communication and involving people and connecting them makes it social. It creates a two-way connection, information sharing and exchange.

### Use of social media in Organisations

For Profit organisations use social media to connect with Customers on a one-to-one basis. Build better brand image and to provide customer support. Companies are able to receive feedback from users and to test new products.

In a research conducted by Maritz Research<sup>v</sup> has shown that as high as nearly 65% of those above 55 years expect companies not only to read their tweets related to the company or its product but also to respond.



The United States of America uses social media to analyse the positive and negative opinions that are shared in the Social Media to gauge the policy feedback through Sentiment Analysis<sup>vi</sup>.

### **Using Social media in District Administration**

The District Administration is at the cutting edge of the Governance and is the face of the Government. In Every state there exists a system of Grievance redressal for the Citizens. Social Media can be used to increase the interaction levels and provide another channel of communication.

Social Media can be effectively used to generate public opinion. But the primary requirement before attempting to influence is to generate enough trust and connection between the organisation and its clients.

That implies that to generate trust and connection there needs to be human face that is to be projected. It is the human face of the Government that can make the adoption of Social media effective and meaningful.

It seems anti-thetical to the fundamental tenets of Bureaucracy to be social. The fundamental theory of Bureaucracy is based on legal-rational authority<sup>vii</sup>

The Government needs to be clear that the aim of adopting Social Media is to get closer to the citizens. It's not just another automated information dissemination system. The coming days require the Governments to be proactive and reach out to citizens. The veil of anonymity cannot work in Social Media.

The Social Media should not be seen as a propaganda machinery or a captive audience. It is an easy and sustainable way to build closer relationship between the Government and the citizens.

### **Citizen Interaction**

The primary reason a citizen would want to interact with Government is to gather information. Most of the times excepting the options available under RTI, accessing information is laborious for the Citizen.

Providing authentic information in a friendly manner is possible through Social Media. Guiding the citizen in the right direction reduces lot of heartburn on the part of the Citizens and the negative publicity on the part of the Government.

Efforts have been made to provide as much information as possible through websites (eg. [www.VibrantGujarat.com](http://www.VibrantGujarat.com)) or the Ministry websites and portals ([www.India.gov.in](http://www.India.gov.in) , [www.GOldirectory.nic.in](http://www.GOldirectory.nic.in) ) at the state or national level, the need becomes acute at the District level.

It is at this level that the information of direct significance to each citizen privately or as part of a segment of population is generated. It is at this level that a greater obstacle to obtain information exists.

In such a scenario Social Media can become the go-to place for Government activities at the District level. It can help in pro-active engagement of Citizens.

### **Citizen engagement**

Unlike traditional types of engagement – Communication and Consultation, Citizen Engagement is an interactive two way process that encourages participation, exchange of ideas and flow of conversation. It reflects willingness on part of government to share information and make citizens a partner in decision making.

Ideally, citizen engagement requires governments to

- Permit participation in agenda-setting, and
- Ensure that policy or project proposals that are generated as a result of this engagement are taken into account while making a final decision

### **Grievance redressal**

The present efforts of Governments to reduce or address Citizens Grievances revolve around single window system and Grievance portals. Social Media can be used to address grievances or to direct the citizen to the right remedies. The current use of Social media is limited to grievance redressal primarily.

### **Collaboration and Policy Feedback**

The Governments all over the world endeavour to collaborate with citizens in activities in many voluntary activities and drives such as cleanliness drives. Social



Media can be an effective tool to mobilize the citizens and to receive their co-operation in such activities. Citizen participation can be greatly enhanced by sustained use of social media to connect and influence public opinion and behaviour.

It's ultimately about connecting and communicating for an action. The traditional approach of creating the infrastructure or the set-up and expecting the philanthropic side of the citizens to propel them to such activities will lead to luke warm response as hitherto.

True participation comes when there is stake that is being felt by the citizen. The primary role and aim of the Government should be to create that stake-holder mind set in the Citizen by connecting with him through Social Media.

This is in consonance with the present philosophy of adoption of Social Audit in NREGA, Water User Association in the Canal projects etc.

### **The way forward**

Every important policy needs commitment of Government at the highest level for effective and meaningful adoption of Social Media in governance. The Government should support adoption of Social Media by providing critical inputs in the following areas.

#### **Defining the Objectives**

The adoption of Social media to support and supplement the regular Governance structure must be amply clarified.

#### **Choosing the Platform**

Choice of platform for citizen engagement depends on the usage levels of target audience. Own or third party provided. In third party platforms care has to be taken to choose a platform that allows for easy migration and legal compliance of data and privacy issues.

For example Orkut was leading the social networking some time ago, today it is Facebook and Google plus. Both these organisations have divergent views on data and privacy.

## **Governance Structures**

Deciding on the levels of authority and responsibility of employees which is similar to traditional role allocation function performed by Government. The viral capacity (i.e. the news spreads quickly) and demand for instant gratification (queries, responses and counter-responses are posted instantaneously) needs to be addressed.

## **Response and Responsiveness of the Social Media establishment**

This indicates the how often would the pages/information be updated, in what manner would the responses be posted, what would be the turnaround time of responses etc.

## **Allocation of Resources**

More often than not, it is advisable to set aside a dedicated team that may be trained to respond to queries and comments. For example the Delhi Traffic Police has a dedicated team for its Facebook page.

## **Accountability**

Clearance systems that distinguish between situations when an official position is required, and when open conversation is appropriate.

## **Content creation, moderation and archival**

Content Creation & Social media profiles overlap, therefore sharing consistent content on all social media platforms should form the bedrock of content policy. While the social media tools allow everyone to become a creator, for the official account, content will have to be specified and tailored to the site on which it is being published.

A moderation policy should also be published if the platform permits others to add their own content; this informs people what they can post whilst protecting others who may visit

## **Address Legal Compliance issues**

The requirements for existing legislations e.g. RTI etc. need to be kept in mind and are paramount in influencing decisions regarding record keeping

## Fresh perspective required

It is different from traditional media such as print, radio and television in two significant ways – first, the amount of content that can be generated by the users themselves far exceeds the content generation by news/opinion makers and second, its “viral” ability for potential exponential spread of information by word of mouth and interlinking of the various social media platforms, thereby considerably reducing the control over spread of any such information.

These characteristics denote the paradigm shift from Web 1.0 technologies that enabled simple information sharing and basic two-way transactions to Web 2.0 – where literally everyone is/can be a user as well as generator of content, thereby moving from transaction to transformation. Social media is redefining the way people communicate with one another.<sup>viii</sup>

## Conclusion

**If citizens are customers then Government should definitely engage.**

The number one test for whether we should invest in Social Media is whether, and to what degree, our stakeholders are themselves using it. A survey of our stakeholders is far more important in this regard than a survey of other organizations like our own.

Which of our stakeholders have Social Media accounts and in which platforms? How many friends do they have there? Are they involved in other causes there? How often do they consume information through the site? More importantly, how often do they produce information through the site? These are the things we need to know in order to decide both whether and how to participate in Social Media.

## References:

---

<sup>i</sup> Public Private Partnership

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2011/02/egypts-revolutionary-fire/>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://wcatwc.arh.noaa.gov/2011/03/11/lhvpd9/01/webetalhvdpd9-01.txt>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://japan.person-finder.appspot.com/?lang=ja>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2011/6080/twitter-users-want-brands-to-respond-to-their-complaints> and <http://maritzresearch.com/shared-content/Press-Releases/2011/Are-you-listening-Twitter-users-want-complaints-read-addressed.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.b-eye-network.com/print/15344>

<sup>vii</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational-legal\\_authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational-legal_authority)

<sup>viii</sup> Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organisations (draft) published by Department of Information Technology, Government of India.