

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AS A NEW TOOL FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATION DEPARTMENTS**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper contains an in-depth study of various state and Central Government agencies concerning how they are taking the emergence of social media vis-à-vis their functioning and content analysis of their official Facebook Page. The emergence of social media has renovated how information is broadcasted and is reached across the world. It has changed the traditional media approaches which were limited to only sharing the information to users but this Social media channel can pass on the information and in turn seek the response on it. People are free to post their views on emerging topics. Like all other sectors, the Government of India has also utilized this Social Media as a game-changer in Indian Governance. It gives the people of India, a chance to engage with government and government agencies. In recent times, people of India have been often seen praising the government bodies for the good work and at the same time, people can raise their concerns, reach out to higher authorities – bypassing the other officials and have a larger impact. Various government agencies at National, state, and local levels are using this Social Media for a better reach to the people of India. The government of India has recently initiated a flagship plan called 'Digital India' with a long-term aim to transform India into a digital accreditation space. This will ensure that government efforts and services are easily reachable to the people of India electronically. Throughout the country, government agencies and people have been using social media vigorously creating agility of response to such a diverse platform.*

**Keywords:** Education, Democracy, Population, Justice, Prosperity, Environment, Fundamental.

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### **Introduction**

Out of many social media platforms available, Facebook emerges out to be one of the top and influential platforms to broadcast and communicate. One of the many examples is the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, which is responsible for the coordination of all skill development efforts across the country, ensuring the smooth demand and supply ratio of skilled manpower & building and enhancing training frameworks and innovative powerhouse for new jobs to be created.

This department uses a Facebook Page named 'Skill India' which is used to broadcast information, news related to skill development, government's efforts in enhancing training centers for new skills, promoting talent minds of the country, and appreciating the efforts of our countrymen. This is an open platform for users to view the information shared by the government, to post viewer's points of view and people can share the information shared by the ministry on their networks. It has been observed that this Facebook page of the Indian Ministry contains more than 8 Lac likes and around 5 Lac + people following this page religiously. This is helping this government body to help spread their aim of making India the skill capital of the world, which is reflected in their Cover Photo used.

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Skill India page has taken the Digital India mission to next level by providing the PMKVY students with the facility to validate their certificates and mark sheets using their QR code enabled certificates. This page is often seen uploading videos and content on the training material available like NAPS is one of the most sustainable models of an apprentice. The government of India has been using Facebook extraordinarily smartly. Their front cover photo in itself displays the message – ‘Details of services for 75 years of Independence’. This is a very quick source to transfer information to a large scale, considering the large population of India and also because millions of Indians use Facebook in their regular life.

#### **Ministry of External Affairs – India: Official Facebook Page**

There is a separate Facebook page for the ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The page is currently liked and followed by 21+Lac people. This page is used to broadcast events such as Prime Minister's recent visit to the United States, India-SriLanka meets for enhancing the bilateral ties of both countries. Further expanding its digital presence, the Ministry of External Affairs recently integrated various social media handles.

This Ministry of External Affairs has pioneered the presence of social media platforms to engage with the larger public and this, in turn, has proved beneficial for the ministry. It helped the ministry in connecting with the Indian Diaspora, and in extending support to a larger public in times of crisis. Its digital journey started in 2011 with a Twitter account @Indian Diplomacy & @MEAIndia's Official account. Both these accounts were for different objectives. The latter is the official Twitter handle of ministry and surprisingly it contains the second most followed Foreign Ministry handle in the entire world, whereas the former is more focused on creating a positive cultural pretext of India. Its content has a variety of content like speeches of ministers, joint statements, press conferences, press content, etc. The MEA India Facebook page is one of the most likes and followed foreign ministry pages in the world.

#### **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports India – Official Page Facebook**

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is a branch of the Government of India which administers the Department of Youth affairs and the department of Sports in India. This official Facebook page of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports India has over 1 Lac likes and around 59,000 people following it. Ministry uses this page to broadcast the news and information related to youth achievement, youth schemes, and accreditation earned from youth in sports. It has been recently observed that this Facebook page was most active during the Tokyo Olympics & Paralympics. Excited and proud of India's awardees from the Olympics, this page shared a glimpse of Olympics achievements. Due to the recent achievements achieved by Indian players in sports, there is a high stigma of people attached to sports and medals. Circulating these win the heart of millions of people.

Various other types of content shown on this page include advertisement and publicity of Government of India's Clean India Mission. This page is also seen promoting content like keeping fit and exercising for the well-being of the human mind and body.

#### **Government of India Social media usage – Twitter**

This is the official Twitter page of the Government of India and it was created in December 2014. Various government ministries have their separate social media handles. Ministry of Railways – On the Twitter handle of the Ministry of Railways, there are 1.15 million followers. This handle has been widely used for spreading government initiatives concerning Indian railways and their services. Ministry has been prompt in reaching out to the concerns of the public and addressing the grievances. Various incidents have been reported in recent times where people have tweeted about their good/bad railway experience while traveling themselves. There was an incident where a student was traveling via rail to appear for an exam in a city and due to the train getting stuck, the person tweeted the fear of not appearing in the exam. Taking this on high priority the then, Railway minister, immediately took charge of the situation and made sure the train reaches its destination on time and to provide all required benefits to the passengers traveling.

#### **PMO India**

This is the official page of the Office of Prime Minister India. This page has been directly used by our honorable prime minister to address the larger public of the recent events, government's participation, schemes, situation handling, appreciating the healthcare people, appreciating sports youth, appreciating social workers. It has been observed that it is not a big deal now to be able to out your concerns directly at the prime minister's table. We can directly use this Twitter handle to thank, complain,

and acknowledge anything to the prime minister's office. Our Prime Minister has been using this handle very frequently and informally to communicate to the people of India and this has a massive fan following of 44.1 Million people.

With the ever-increasing use of social media and its impact on our daily lives, it has become a preferred medium of interaction between people which includes the government interacting with people as well. Indian Railways has been proactively handling more than 7000 tweets per day which include various types of complaints, suggestions, and assisting people. Once Dehradun school students were traveling from the train and their train got delayed by around 7 hours due to heavy fog, and children tweeted about getting food. The incident was proactively handled by the Ministry of Railways. Hence Suresh Prabhu, the then railway ministry member, ensured delivering food to these students and taken helping out to a whole new level.

Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India – This page has around 29.7 K followers. The YouTube page was created on 17th July 2014 and has over 2,245,402 views on the videos uploaded. It contains videos such as Celebration of RashtriyaPoshanMaah, SHEBox 2, etc.

Press Information Bureau, Government of India – The name of its YouTube channel is PIB, Government of India. It has 1.44 Million subscribers to the page. The page was created on 5th May 2011 and has over 191,213,813 views on the videos uploaded on the page. It contains videos like Cabinet briefing by Union Ministers, PM launching Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, etc.

### **Content Analysis**

Content analysis in this research contains the study of verified official Facebook pages of Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of state as well as Central Government. The exclusion criterion was done on the basis that the pages that had more than one lakh followers were considered under study. The states included in the analysis on the basis of information procured from the websites of their DIPR of are- Gujarat, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Press Information Bureau of India (PIB). The time period for Facebook page study taken was from 2017 to 2019. Twenty top posts from each year were picked up randomly for the study from each page applying the same tool for filtering the posts.

Mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis was applied for the quantification of the data and understanding the opinions and approach of the people respectively. The quantitative study includes calculation based on the results of applause rate, average engagement rate and amplification rate. Applause rate percentage is the percentage of total Likes and Favourites, whereas Average Engagement Rate is calculated by extracting out total number of Likes, comments and share on any post relative to the total number of followers and multiplied by 100. Average Engagement Rate signifies the inclination and involvement of the followers towards the post. However Amplification rate shows the percentages of "Share" of the post.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Facebook posts are not for averages when it comes to value of content. Few posts get thousands likes and hundreds shares and many doesn't get even tens of those. For this every Facebook page was studied for content of their posts. Selection of posts was done by using same search filter but this time instead of selecting top 20 posts shown by Facebook we scrolled deeper and purposively selected top performing 10 posts per year per page. The posts selected are as following:

There are three categories of posts that have been identified broadly. Non Governmental Posts or Social posts. These are posts which does not represent any government achievement directly. These show some individuals success story or any good event in society or any big achievement of any individual. Government Achievement Posts are those which show positive results of government schemes of positive claims of government schemes. Government Information Posts are straight forward information regarding government vacancies, exam schedules, application opening of new schemes etc.

### **Press Information Bureau Facebook Page**

Press Information Bureau is leading government Facebook page for union government departments and Ministries. In 2017 it was overwhelmed with 4 Prime Minister related, 3 president related post, 1 beating Retreat program, one Russia-India-China joint press statements and 1 Union budget speech. Most of these posts have above average likes, comments and shares, specially beating retreat program post which can be technically put in government section got maximum likes, shares and views. Most of the post related to Prime Minister, President or ministers get maximum attraction at their

own respective pages which were eventually shared by PIB Facebook page. Similarly in 2018 Republic Day parade post attracted good audience. Information related to UPSC exam was also liked very much. One post was from vice chairman Niti Aayog press conference, one post was live coverage of national journalism awards, one related to Prime Minister inaugurating Global mobility Summit and one related to Swachh Bharat mission awards. In 2019 we have noticed a bit more diversified posts in sample of 10. One is related to inland fisheries, another one is of economic survey, one is of Indian Navy, one is about PM receiving Seoul Peace award, one for giving news about Indian Forest Service exam and Combined Defence Services Exam and one post is about GST collection. All these posts have attracted good shares and likes.

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