

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADDRESSING THE PUBLIC GRIEVANCES: A STUDY ON SELECT TWITTER ACCOUNTS OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES OF TELANGANA

Dr. Geetha Naik Vislavath*

ABSTRACT

It has become common to witness the politicians operating a Blue tick Twitter Account tagging and sharing the sensational content with their peers and followers throughout the globe, inspired from whom, the government agencies have also started operating formal Twitter Accounts to share the latest developments of their domains, sometimes also considering the grievances launched by followers and tagged or twitted to such formal accounts to initiate instantaneous action. For example, the Ministry of Municipal; Administration of Telangana took more than one hundred Twitter tags as actionable intelligence and acted upon the same, it shows how Twitter stands different from other social media and became an indispensable digital platform in modern Public Administration. Therefore, an attempt has been made to study the pros and cons of considering formal Twitter Accounts of select government agencies of Telangana as the formidable digital grievance boxes. This paper also attempts to gather the perceptions of stakeholders on following the formal Twitter Accounts of the government agencies of Telangana and also draws a comparative analysis of different social media sources the select agencies with the Twitter Account to offer logical conclusions on its adaptability as the grievance launch pad.

Keywords: *Twitter, Public Grievances, Telangana.*

Introduction

It is no hyperbole that media is rapidly being replaced by the social media in every sphere and occasioning the government and non government agencies to swift from media relations to the social media relations through ensuring their presence in well known social media platforms like Twitter, Face Book and Instagram. The presence in social media not only helps communicating the ideas, plans and programmes of the state agencies to the wide range of stakeholders, but also connects the dots at all the levels of state administration. For example, it has become very common to read the news of passengers twitting about the problems on board the moving train straight to the Railway Minister and getting the problem fixed instantaneously. This is one classic example to illustrate how social media accounts can be effectively used to ensure the most acceptable standards of public administration. Twitter Account stands different from that of other social media channels for two important reasons, one lies in the celebrity tags followed and scrupulously responded by the followers and the other is the transparent communication of the message to all the followers. These two virtues are potential enough to convert Twitter account into a formal mode of communication between the government agencies and the civilians.

* Assistant Professor of Public Administration, Government Degree College, Hayathnagar, India.

In fact, most of the government agencies have been actively participating in social media activities, especially by the top aces of the Government like the ministers and bureaucrats to build the personal brand and that of their departments. For example, the Twitter account of the Prime Minister of India is being followed by more than 70 million which is the highest ever followed Twitter account, thus, there is every possibility that the Office of Prime Minister can have direct communication with seven Crore odd people which can be made a formal source of communication if the state policies so desire. This paper attempts to see whether any such feasibility exists to formalise the social media accounts like Twitter accounts of the state administrators, for which the state of Telangana is considered to collect the secondary and primary data, however, it is very required and quite rational to review the literature available on the linkages between the social media and the state administration before attributing the merits of social media accounts to the state of Telangana and its government agencies. Accordingly, the major findings of the literature are presented below to form the objectives of this paper.

Review of Literature

Gangaram (2020)¹ has expressed in his paper that the social media is a double sided sword that can be used for spreading both good and bad across the society, but at the same time it can be used by the state to discharge many of its functions. He has cited in his paper twenty incidences of Maharashtra wherein the state government took *suo motto* action against the employees for their negligence and mischievous attitude based on the social media content that became viral against such employees.

Santhanam (2021)² has mentioned in his study that most of the politicians holding the offices of state have been responding to the social media posts of celebrities like film stars and business men having charm in the society, he took three southern states of India namely, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu to support his hypothesis. His finding can be supported without an iota of doubt, as our common prudence also reveals the same. Therefore, social media accounts of the state agencies must think beyond the celebrity posts to make them more effective.

Rani and Mujafar (2022)³ have found in their study that citizens do not follow all the social media accounts of the government agencies or that of ministers, but they are inclined to follow the social media accounts of those politicians who are more appealing in their looks or creates sensational news through their activities. It is true to a larger extent as witnessed in the select Twitter accounts of this paper, thus, there is a need to add more enthralling news and views shared by the state agencies in their social media accounts before using them as formal communication channels.

Dheeren Prasad (2022)⁴ recommends in his paper to use social media accounts of the state and union government establishments to reveal the future plans and ongoing programmes of the state, which may create positive opinions on the state policies among the larger strata of the population. He took the social media accounts of Indian Railways and conducted a study on the impact of scenic pictures shared by the IRCTC on tourism packages, and concluded that the social media channels of both IRCTC and Railways have had a great impact on their tour packages. This type of benefits can be had by all the government agencies.

Gaps in Literature

The review of available literature on the linkages between the state administration and effective usage of social media platforms reveals that hardly any work has been done to think on the possibility of using Twitter account as the digital complaint or grievance box in the administration of government agencies, more particularly, there is very weak evidence on attributing the said study to the state government agencies of Telangana. Therefore, the following objectives are proposed to pen this paper and offer conclusions on the role of Twitter account in the administration of Telangana government agencies.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the feasibility of using Twitter as a formal mode of communication by the Government agencies of Telangana.
- To review the Twitter trends of select state government agencies of Telangana.
- To analyse the perceptions of stakeholders on the possibility of using Twitter as the formal source of communication between the state and the citizens.

Research Methodology

The first objective is perceived through reviewing the secondary data available on the pros and cons of using social media by the state agencies, the second objective shall be achieved by tabulating the data on seven Twitter accounts operated by various ministries and departments of Telangana, wherein, the data pertaining to the followers and number of Tweets during the selected period of study shall be analysed to draw the interpretations. On the other hand, the third objective requiring primary data shall be collected from fifty respondents as explained in the sample frame below and tested with the help of Likert's weighted average mean.

Sample Size

This paper proposes a sample of fifty respondents as, still it is at pilot stage, of whom government officials and citizens shall be selected in equal proportion from the city of Hyderabad, however, reasonable care is exercised in representing all the walks of life among the sample cluster of civilians like students, free lancers, employees, entrepreneurs etc, so that the perceptions can be generalised to draw the conclusions of this paper.

Usage of Twitter by the Government agencies of Telangana

Table 1

S.No	Name of the Department	No of Tweets	Remarks
1	Telangana CMO	10.6 K	
2	Telangana State Police	14.7K	
3	Office of KTR	6289	
4	Telangana State Education Department	330	
5	KTR News	6.4K	
6	Office of Minister for Health, Telangana	1146K	
7	Minister for IT, industries, MA&UD, Telangana	14.6K	

Seven government agencies of Telangana are considered to see how active they are in using Twitter accounts to share their achievement and respond to the complaints tagged to their accounts. It is found that a vast majority of the government agencies' Twitter accounts at the state level are being used only to spread the messages like greetings and condolences. However, the Ministry of IT & Municipal Administration is found to be proactive in responding to the complaints tagged to Twitter account. Especially providing rescue assistance during calamities and helping the NRI workers struggling in places like Dubai and the Middle East but hardly any tags pertaining to the operations of respective departments could be noticed. For example: The Ministry of Municipal Administration is found to be responding to the complaint tags of those activities with which municipal administration has hardly got any operational role. However, the Police Department deserves appreciation for remaining active on its Twitter account as more than 14000 Twitter pertaining to the department and its operations are traceable. It sets an example to other departments in effectively using social media channels as digital grievance boxes. Unfortunately, the Education Department holding a Twitter account kept its social media platforms in the defunct stage which must be activated to entertain grievances from vast stakeholders like students and parents. Indeed, it is not paradoxical to recommend social media like Twitter in state wings like Education Department as the grievance boxes in the administration of public offices, because, it is not possible for every stakeholder to visit the appealing authorities or the officers located in district and state capitals to launch their complaint.

Therefore, the Twitter account can bridge the gap expeditiously and communicate the issues of day-to-day operations. There is no doubt that traditional e. mail is being used by various government agencies to improve administrative efficiency and connect themselves with the stakeholders of remote areas, but the problem with e. mail is, the content in e. mail can be viewed only by designated recipients whereas social media tags are open, quick and transparent enough to be viewed by all the stakeholders of a particular scalar chain, such that, the quick remedy or action can be initiated at all the levels, keeping this benefit at the helm, it is advocated to all the government agencies to effectively use social media accounts in ensuring smooth civic administration.

Perceptions of Stakeholders on Using Twitter Accounts in Effective Public Administration of government agencies:

The primary data focuses on seven important statements as shown in the following table and rated on 5 point scale ranging from 1 to 5 representing strong, disagreement, disagreement, neutral, agreement and strong agreement.

Table 2

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	WAM
1	Social media can succeed to bridge the gap between Government agencies and civilians in Telangana	3	4	10	19	14	3.74
2	Social media accounts can be considered as the formal state channels of communication	8	13	10	15	4	2.88
3	The role of social media is beyond the mere dissemination of information in public administration	0	3	9	20	18	4.06
4	The issue of confidentiality would not be a major concern in using social media platforms by the state agencies	28	17	4	2	0	1.44
5	Social media platforms have got the capacity to spread the information at a fast rate among the government machinery comparing to other modes	0	3	2	10	35	4.54
6	Twitter can be recommended as a formidable digital grievance box, provided confidentiality is not a matter of concern.	2	5	8	25	10	3.52
7	Mischievous and malicious tags of social media accounts used by government agencies could be major impediments in using social media as a formal channel.	1	2	6	22	19	4.12

Interpretation

It can be seen from table 2 that respondents have expressed mixed opinions on the feasibility of using social media accounts as formal mode of communication in public administration. The weighted average means were very weak when statement has been made to rule out the confidentiality issues of complaints made through social media channels. Similarly a vast majority of the respondents have not favored in using Twitter account as formal modes, nevertheless, they have agreed the capacity of social media in rapidly spreading the information across the chain. Therefore, the government must bring a trade off between these attributes and examine the feasibility of effectively connecting civic administration and formal social media accounts.

Conclusion

This paper is an attempt made to check the feasibility of using social media accounts of the state agencies in redressing the public grievances in the state of Telangana, through which it is concluded that there is every possibility of tuning social media accounts like Twitter accounts of the state agencies as digital grievance and complaint boxes to fix many problems faced by the citizens and add new dimensions to effective public administration, however, the perceptions drawn from the primary data induces to conclude that there must be a standard operating process of social media accounts with a robust policy to maintain confidentiality and accountability of the content shared through social media accounts of the state in the due course of administering the civic concerns.

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