Chapter-3

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW MEDIA TOOLS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS BY DELHI TRAFFIC POLICE AND UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Public Relations, as a department holds a very important place in the domain of the functioning of government organisations or departments. The democratically elected executive discharges its responsibilities towards the people through the arms of the government and in a welfare state like ours it becomes very important to convey to the people effectively the steps taken by the government to mitigate the inconveniences and sufferings of the people.

However, for organisations, which have a very close connect with the people, the existence of a well-oiled public relations machinery becomes even more important. For example, departments or organisations that handle vital issues of public importance such as law and order, education, transport, communication, food supply, health etc, a vibrant and effective communication infrastructure becomes very important because the functioning of these departments directly affect the daily lives of the citizens.

"It (public relations) is about putting the organizations best foot forward on a daily basis. This means issuing press releases and organizational information that presents the organization and its executives in a positive light. In addition to issuing news and information, public relations seek opportunities to engage with news media and the public on organizational matters." ("The importance of pr in today's government," 2012)

Prior to the arrival of the internet based new media communication platforms, the options available to the practitioners of public relations were rather limited. They were over dependent on the print and electronic media to convey their information to the public. In addition, the media, being the gate keeper of the information, was absolutely entitled to convey what it desired and more importantly, when it desired. There was no mechanism through which the public relations practitioners could reach the target audience directly at a time convenient and beneficial to them.

For example, in the event of a major traffic snarl in a metropolitan city, there was no medium through which the public could be warned to avoid traveling to the location of the jam. The newspapers would be published only the next day and the news bulletins on television or radio would also be aired at a certain time. Moreover, if there are more important news items to be covered that particular day, the prior information about the traffic snarl may not be aired at all. In such a scenario, there remains every possible chance of the traffic snarl aggravating further since, many more unsuspecting motorists would come to that particular road and contribute to the jam.

Similarly, for a major educational institution, where students take admission from all parts of the country and even abroad, there was no media through which the students could be informed about various admission related issues. In most cases, prospective students and their families had to come and camp in that particular city till the entire admission process was completed. This not only led to additional expenditure but also logistical difficulties for the students.

However, the arrival of new media has triggered a major change in the public relations domain. Now, these internet based new media platforms can be used to convey vital real time information to the people which enables them to plan their day or work schedule accordingly. Today, there are custom made new media platforms available to cater to different kinds of requirements. The corporate world has adopted these tools with great enthusiasm and the communication strategies are now depending a lot on these digital platforms. This study is trying to study how the adoption of these tools can benefit the public sector as well.

In a recent study done by ING, it was reported that 81% of PR professionals feel they can no longer do their job without social media. 78% of them felt it was important to their daily work. On the flip side, 78% of journals feel they can no longer do their job without social media. 50% of them admit that when they use social media, they do not feel the need to fact-check." (Torossian, 2013)

Among the new media platforms, social media site Facebook.com, holds a very important position. As in June, 2015, Facebook has about 1.18 billion active users world over. Such a humongous figure obviously conveys its immense

capacity to reach out to the people. "India -- the world's second largest Facebook audience - will surpass 100 million mobile phone Facebook users for the first time this year and by 2017, will have more mobile Facebook users than the US," Research firm eMarketer has said. ("By 2017, India to have largest Facebook users," 2015).

The above figure clearly corroborates the immense reach Facebook has within India. In fact, some other studies have shown that the penetration of the social media site has now crossed the barriers of the cities and reached the towns and villages. With the proliferation of smartphones which support the easy browsing of the internet, Facebook is reaching many new users every day.

According to EMarketer report, Facebook userbase in the US will hit 123.1 million followed by India at 101.5 million. However, by 2017, India will have the largest mobilephone userbase at 145.9 million followed by the US at 138.8 million" ("India to have largest number of Facebook users on mobile by 2017," 2015)

Another important new media platform that has become very popular off late is Twitter. This micro blogging site enables the posting of 140 character messages and today, there are more than three billion active Twitter users all over the world. Though, Twitter accounts for little over 17 percent of India's social media market, if we analyse Twitter's reach in terms of numbers, it's a whopping 22 million users, which is a substantial number. ("Twitter India userbase report," 2015)

Apart from the above mentioned new media platforms, there are many more avenues. The organizational website today is an important tool to instantly disseminate information. There are also many more social media platforms such as Youtube which allows video streaming and uploading of videos, Linkdin a site for professionals where the focus is on discussing issues pertaining to the profession and Instagram, which facilitates the immediate uploading of photographs.

The improvement in mobile technology has also brought in internet based messaging platforms such as Whatsapp. Many organisations are today starting Whatsapp services though which queries can be made and pictures, videos etc can be conveniently

shared. Similarly, mobile internet is also facilitating the development of custom made mobile applications through which important information can be downloaded and then easily accessed offline. The traditional telephone helpline has also undergone a sea change in the last few years due to the aid of the internet. The Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) based helpline services are allowing organisations to not only respond to a large number of queries easily but also facilitating the introduction of automated replies to general queries.

"Facebook-owned WhatsApp is the top messaging application in India with 52% market share, followed by Facebook Messenger with 42%, Skype with 37% and WeChat with 26% share, according to GlobalWebIndex (GWI) study." ("By 2017, India to have largest Facebook users," 2015)

"Rapidly increasing mobile penetration in emerging markets like India, coupled with the proliferation of low-cost handsets, is continuing to boost the user growth prospects of US-based social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter as also that of communications apps such as US-based WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, China's WeChat, Japan's Line and homegrown Hike. While India provides the largest user base for WhatsApp, it gives most of the top social networking sites their second-largest subscriber numbers." ("Whats it with Indians and social networks," 2015)

The two public sector organisations under study – the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi have had public relation set ups for a long time. Since both the central government establishments function in the national capital, there has always been a requirement to provide information to the queries of the media as well as take up campaigns for the improvement of the public image of the organisation. For a long period, these organisations have depended on the mainstream media to convey their information to the people. While the mainstream media continues to hold an important position even today, as far as the public relations strategies of these organisations are concerned, a number of new media initiatives have been taken by these organisations to have a more robust communication infrastructure.

The following are the main new media initiatives taken by the organisations under study that have helped the respective organisations in devising a more effective communication campaign to reach the target audience. The new media initiatives of

the Delhi Traffic Police shall be studied first followed by those introduced by the University of Delhi.

3.1 Delhi Traffic Police

The Delhi Traffic Police employs a number of new media options to execute its public relations activities. Traffic management in Delhi is a major challenge as the national capital has more vehicles than all the metropolitan cities of the country. In such a scenario, it becomes absolutely important to communicate the updates on the traffic situation in the city to the motorists on a real time basis and the Delhi Traffic Police employs new media to convey such messages very effectively.

3.1.1 Facebook Page

The Facebook page of the Delhi Traffic Police was introduced in May, 2010 and has since then got more than two lakh likes. In the description of the page, Delhi Traffic Police mentions, "Mobility with safety has to be the guiding principle for any Traffic manager. To achieve this, the Traffic unit needs to build its action plan on the four pillars of Education, Regulation, Enforcement and Road Engineering (ERER) – all well known facets of traffic management. The mantra of ERER, however, needs to become a vision shared by all traffic personnel so that they do not remain moribund and freely contribute newer ideas to enhance mobility with safety. Road users, civil society and all other influential individuals and groups - whether governmental, social, religious and political - need to extend their full support to make roads safer." ("Delhi Traffic Police," 2010)

The page is maintained on a regular basis with updates about the traffic snarls that take place in the city. On an average, the Facebook page of the Delhi Traffic Police uploads about eight to ten posts a day on the traffic situation in the city. After the solution to the traffic problem in a particular area, the page also posts updates that the snarl has been cleared. In addition, the Facebook page also uploads photographs and videos of the various social service activities taken up by the Police. For examples, photographs of various workshops, seminars etc are also put up on the page.

Facebook pages have the option of reviews, where the visitors can review the quality of a page. On the reviews section, the page has got a rating of 3.9 stars out of five, which is quite commendable. Out of the 349 people, who have so far participated in

the review (as on 9th July, 2015), 188 reviews have given the page five stars while 57 have given it four stars. This is a transparent way of assessing the performance of a page.

Generally, the updates are put up in short and terse language so that the users can easily understand the message. On important occasions, the updates are also put up in Hindi for the users who may not be well conversant with English. For example, a Facebook post reads like this –

"Traffic Alert: Breakdown of DTC bus No. DL 1PC 0626 near AIIMS flyover, in the carriageway from South Extension towards Dhoula Kuan. It is being removed. Inconvenience is regretted.

साउथ एक्सटेंशन से धौला कुआँ की तरफ जाने वाले मार्ग पर AIIMS फ्लाईओवर के पास एक DTC बस No. DL 1PC 0626 ख़राब हो गई है जिसे हटाया जा रहा है | असुविधा के लिए खेद है |"

The idea is obviously to convey the desired information in an easy manner without compromising on any of the relevant details. After the solution to a traffic problem also, the information is shared with the people, **"Traffic Alert: Breakdown HTV near Chirga Delhi removed. Traffic is normal now. चिराग दिल्ली के पास जो HTV ख़राब हो गया था उसे वहां से हटा दिया गया है | यातायात अब सामान्य है |"**

There is a continuous effort to reply back to the complaints made by the users. Any visitor to the page can post a query to enquire about the traffic situation prevailing in the city. Generally, the replies are given promptly. However, some complaints about not receiving any response from the Delhi Traffic Police could also be observed.

This provides the scope for two way communication between the Delhi Traffic Police and the general public. Such measures are often avoided by certain organizations, because they fear negative feedback from the public but it must be commended that the Delhi Traffic Police has braved this possibility and reaped very positive results since the number of abuses or complaints were not in very high numbers at all.

Rather, the public seems to have appreciated the efforts made by the authorities to reach out to the people with the relevant information.
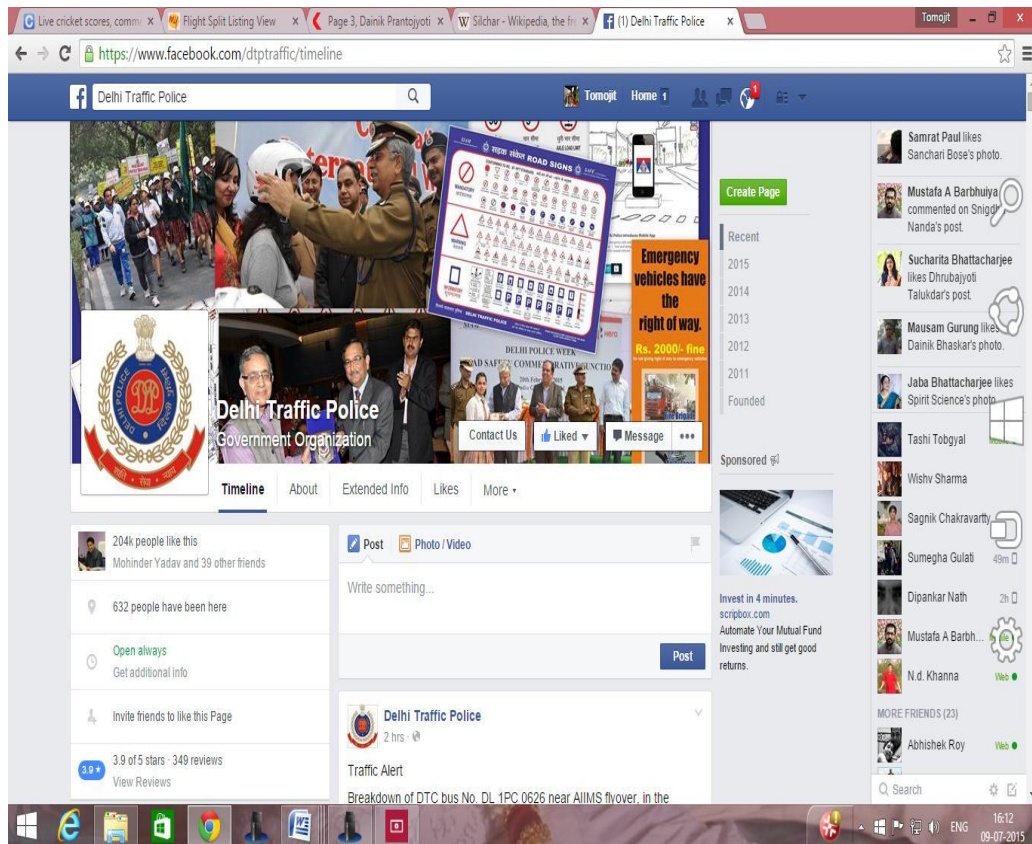
Screen shot of Delhi Traffic Police's Facebook Page

The reach of about 2.04 lakh people through Facebook is nominal if we take into consideration that fact that Delhi has over sixty lakh registered vehicles. However, the national capital's traffic force has been able to reach many more people through Facebook than the other major cities of the nation. The exception in this regard is the Facebook page of the Bengaluru Traffic Police with 2.92 lakh likes, which is marginally higher than that of the Delhi Traffic Police. The Hyderabad Traffic Police's Facebook page also has 2.04 lakh likes. In comparison to the other major cities globally, including those of the developed world, the Delhi Traffic Police's Facebook page's penetration seems much better. Let us have a comparative study of the Facebook penetration of the major Traffic Police forces within India and abroad to analyse how much of an impact the Delhi Traffic Police Facebook page has been able to make.

Table 3.1 Comparison with the Facebook Pages of Traffic Police Forces of Other Cities of India

Facebook Page of a city traffic police (till July, 2015)	Number of likes
Kolkata	66,000
Mumbai	1,060
Chennai Metropolitan Police (The Traffic Police page has been merged here. No separate Traffic Police Page exists)	8,957
Bengaluru	2.92 lakhs
Hyderabad	2.04 lakhs
Pune	79,000

Table 3.2 Comparison with the Facebook Pages of Traffic Police Forces of International Cities

Facebook Page of a city traffic police (till July, 2015)	Number of likes
New York (NYPD Traffic Enforcement Agency)	58,000
London (Metropolitan Police Service)	55,000
Sydney (Traffic and Highway Patrol Command – New South Wales Police)	1.76 lakhs
Toronto (Traffic Services/ Highway Patrol)	2,075

* The above tables have been compiled as per the data available on the Facebook pages of the organizations mentioned in the table as on 9th July, 2015.

3.1.2 Twitter Handle

The official Twitter handle of the Delhi Traffic Police - @dtptraffic was launched simultaneously with its Facebook page in May, 2010. The page has over 3 lakh followers and close to 26,000 thousand tweets have been sent from the handle so far. Much like its Facebook counterpart, about eight to ten tweets are sent out on an average every day updating the motorists about the traffic situation in the national capital.

Since Twitter allows tweets of only 140 characters, the messages are short and direct. The tweets are done simultaneously with Facebook posts and the Facebook links are also provided. In addition, photographs, videos about various events, seminars,

workshops etc are also uploaded regularly. The tweets are generally of the following manner, "Traffic Alert Traffic is normal at DDU Marg".

While, the number of followers to the Twitter handle are more than the number of likes on the Facebook page, the response from the followers are not in very high numbers. It seems that the Twitter handle is primarily used to get traffic updates from the Traffic Police rather than giving any feedback or making any complaints.

Screen shot of the Twitter handle of the Delhi Traffic Police

Much like the Facebook Page, the following of the Twitter handle with over three lakh followers also seems insignificant in comparison to the overall number vehicles in the city. However, combining Facebook and Twitter, more than five lakh people are using social media to get information about the traffic situation in the national capital, which is certainly a very encouraging number. Let us see, how the Twitter handle of the Delhi Traffic Police compares with the official Twitter handles of the traffic police forces of the other cities of the nation and some across the world.

Unlike Facebook, in case of Twitter the Traffic Police forces of all the other major cities do not have the Twitter penetration that the Twitter handle of the Delhi Traffic Police has. While the Kolkata and Pune Traffic police do not have Twitter accounts at all, the ones maintained by the Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad traffic

police forces do not have enough followers. Nor are these Twitter accounts regularly updated. In the international scenario, also, it was surprising to find that the New York, Sydney and Toronto traffic police departments didn't have Twitter handles at all. The London Metropolitan Police does have a have Twitter handle with over 3.05 lakh followers and substantial daily activity, but it is a comprehensive account for the entire city police and not the traffic cell only. Therefore, it may be easily concluded that the Delhi Traffic Police has taken a lead over many established traffic police forces of the developed world also in terms of utilizing the benefits of new media for reaching out to the citizens.

Table 3.3 Comparison with the Twitter Handles of Traffic Police Forces of Other Cities of India

Twitter Handle of a city traffic police (till July, 2015)	Number of followers
Kolkata	No Twitter handle
Mumbai	80
Chennai City	7,338
Bengaluru	35,000
Hyderabad	1,521
Pune	No Twitter handle

Table 3.4 Comparison with the Twitter Handles of Traffic Police Forces of International Cities

Twitter Handles of a city traffic police (till July, 2015)	Number of followers
New York (NYPD Traffic Enforcement Agency)	No Twitter handle
London (Metropolitan Police Service)	3.05 lakhs
Sydney (Traffic and Highway Patrol Command – New South Wales Police)	No Twitter handle
Toronto (Traffic Services/ Highway Patrol)	No Twitter Handle

* The above tables have been compiled as per the data available on the Facebook pages of the organizations mentioned in the table as on 9th July, 2015.

3.1.3 SMS Updates

From May, 2002 onwards, the Delhi Traffic Police has been providing traffic updates through SMS to users. Users can SMS on the number, 9811452220 and get details

pending notices, challans against vehicle traffic diversions etc. However, a subscription based SMS service through which traffic updates could be received by the commuters through the number 09219592195 has been discontinued, after a successful beginning in the year 2010 prior to the Commonwealth Games.

The present SMS service is not subscription based and is also not toll free like the other service. It can be basically used to get details about pending cases, penalties etc against specific vehicles. The number of the vehicle can be sent and these details can be obtained. However, the subscription based service had become very popular among the users and on the basis of the success of this service only, the other new media initiatives such as Facebook, Twitter etc were introduced. The Delhi Traffic Police subsequently has introduced many other facilities for providing traffic updates such as the service on internet based mobile chatting service Whatsapp and a dedicated mobile application, which have also become very popular among the users.

3.1.4 Delhi Traffic Police Website

The website of the Delhi Traffic Police – www.delhitrafficpolice.com, is an important ingredient of their public relations strategy. A continuous scroll on the home page of the site keeps sharing details about the areas in which traffic has been hampered. In addition, a lot of effort is made through the website to educate the visitors about the traffic rules and the rules for safe driving.

There is a dedicated section on road safety and education. In another section tiltled 'Be Road Smart', details about the high congestion areas, water logging prone locations, functioning of traffic signals are shared with the visitors. The 'Public Interface' section tells the visitors about the rules of becoming traffic wardens, as well as information about authorized parking areas, prepaid booths, mobile application usage etc. Through another link titled 'Are you street smart' a downloadable board traffic game is provided to raise awareness about the proper usage of traffic rules.

The website has been designed in a specific manner to give the police force a humane impression. There is a separate 'services' section, in which it is clearly enumerated how to get a no objection certificate or a permission into the no entry areas. The 'Know Your Traffic Circle' link gives details of all the traffic circles along with the

mobile numbers of the concerned Deputy Commissioners as well as the Assistant Deputy Commissioners.

Another very popular link on the website is the 'Fare Calculator' section, through which the exact fare for auto rickshaw or taxi travel within the city can be collected just by entering the approximate distance of the travel. However, this link would be more convenient for the users, if the fare calculator gives details of the fare between two locations, since a lot of the users may not be aware about the exact distance between two places. But despite this shortcoming, it can be very handy especially for those who are new to the city.

The 'Navigator' section takes the visitor to Google maps. The website support team of the Delhi Traffic Police can certainly look at developing their own 'navigation app' on which traffic logjams can be pointed out real time. Rather than providing a link to Google, such an arrangement would be really beneficial.

Apart from the 'Traffic Updates' scroll, another scroll titled 'Traffic tips' also keeps running which gives information such as organization of 'lok adalats' for settling of pending cases etc. This apart, there are the usual sections generally found in all such websites such as the helpline numbers, photo gallery, notices sections. An 'FAQs' section has been provided on which all basic questions pertaining to traffic such as rules for obtaining NOCs, paying traffic related penalties, towing away of vehicles etc have been shared shared in a lucid manner.

Women's safety has been a matter of great concern for the national capital for a long time now. To make the women feel safer, a dedicated mobile application titled 'Himmat' has been created by the Delhi Police. Through the application, one can easily contact the police and relatives in case of any emergency. Though the 'Himmat' app is not directly connected with the traffic wing, but its links have been shared on the site as well, presumably to increase its popularity.

Another section with the name 'Traffic advisories/diversions' shares information about the areas, where traffic diversions have been or are going to be put in place. Community involvement has also been given due importance. The 'Community Initiative' section gives details about the initiatives such as opening of road safety clubs, enrolling of schools as members of this club along with photographs of the

events. However, it was disappointing to note that most of the information as well as data shared on this link pertained to the 2011-2013 period signifying that the section has not been updated for the last couple of years. The Delhi Traffic Police would certainly do well to update this section, as the formation of road safety clubs in schools does sound like a very noble initiative.

Efforts have also been made to make the website interactive in nature. The Feedback section of the site is divided into two sections – complaints and suggestions. On the complaints section, a visitor can easily lodge his complaint by entering his name, address, email, mobile number and the complaint. The complaints have also been divided into sections such as refusal, overcharging, misbehavior and harassment for the convenience of the complainants. The suggestion section is also similarly designed and easy to use. The social media links for Facebook and Twitter have also been provided on the top of the site facilitating the movement of the visitor directly to the social media sites for sharing of information.
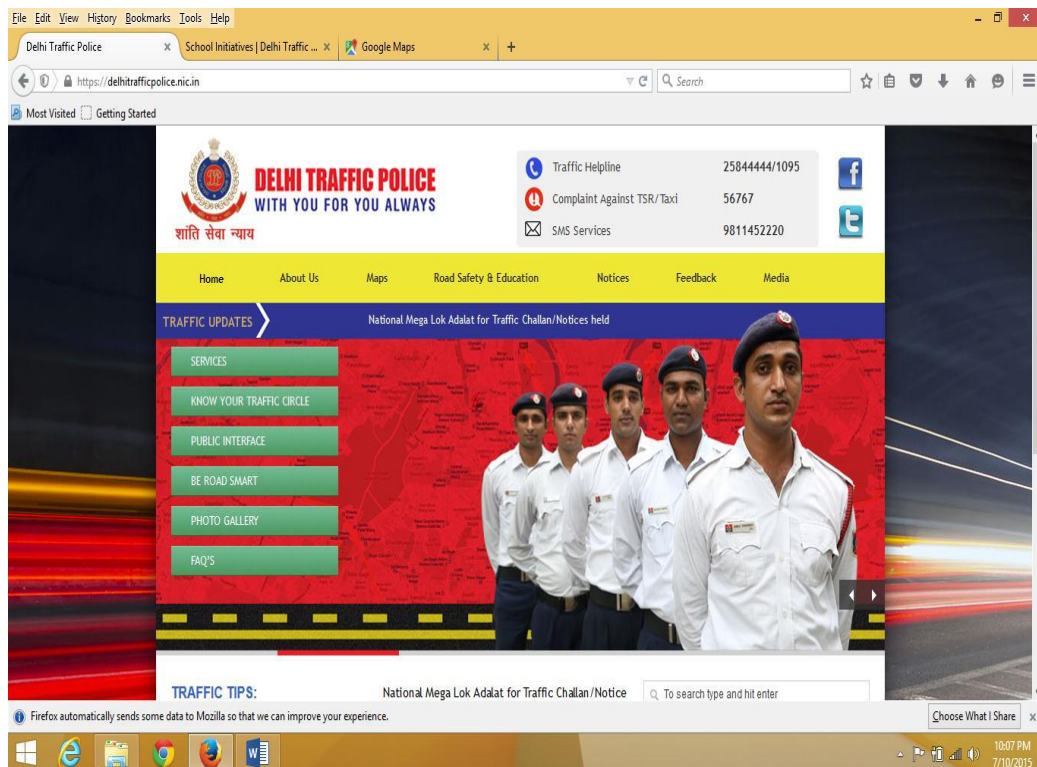
Screenshot of the Delhi Traffic Police website

The site also performs well in comparison to the traffic police websites of the other major traffic police forces of the country. The Mumbai Traffic Police site –

www.trafficpolicemumbai.maharashtra.gov.in, is also quite comprehensive but it seems more focused on showcasing its achievements rather than helping out the visitors. The 'Achievements' section is the most prominent with details of the number of cases handled, penalties imposed etc. The Kolkata Traffic Police's website – www.kolkatatrafficpolice.gov.in is also pretty detailed with its content but the website of the Delhi Traffic Police scores more with its attractive look and provisions such as a downloadable game, fare calculator etc. The Chennai Traffic Police doesn't have a dedicated website while the Bengaluru Traffic Police's website – www.bangaloretrafficpolice.gov.in looks a bit cluttered with a lot of phone numbers and links in on the home page. The website of the Hyderabad Traffic Police – www.htp.gov.in is well designed on the pattern of a traffic junction, but it doesn't have much new to offer in terms of content.

Interestingly, four major traffic police departments of prominent cities across the world – London, New York, Sydney and Toronto did not have dedicated websites. In all these cases, traffic related links were provided on the website of the city police. The links were also mostly inadequate in terms of providing real time traffic information to the motorists.

3.1.5 WhatsApp Service

The latest entrant to the bouquet of new media tools employed by the Delhi Traffic Police is the WhatsApp helpline service. WhatsApp is an internet based chatting service, through which users can easily share photographs, videos with each other. The messaging service currently has over 800 active users worldwide and the number is only expected to increase further in the years to come. In a city like Delhi, a majority of the motorists have access to Smartphone, which makes it very convenient for them to post their complaints, queries, suggestions to the traffic police authorities.

Introduced in October, 2014, the Delhi Traffic Police can be reached through the number 8750871493. According to media reports, Delhi Traffic Police received close to 85,000 complaints on the WhatsApp service till April, 2015. Out of these, over 7,000 complaints were found to be genuine and were settled by the Police authorities. The figures shared by the Traffic Police with the media genuinely prove that the service has been of huge benefit to the commuters in the city. There are many

occasions when a motorist may not be able to call the traffic police on phone, but can easily leave a message on Whatsapp.

The Traffic Police authorities have been able to gauge the potential of this new medium in reaching out to the target audience and therefore, substantial manpower has been pressed into service to make the service a success. The Whatsapp service is available in both English and Hindi round the clock and an inspector and 25 traffic police officers monitor the complaints on a 24 hour basis. ("WhatApp service, a success," 2015)

Interestingly, many other traffic police forces in the country are also slowly adapting to this new mode of communication primarily because of its easy accessibility and immediate reach. While the traffic police forces of the bigger cities such as Mumbai and Kolkata do not yet have Whatsapp services, the tier two cities seem to have taken a lead in this regard. The cities of Lucknow, Patna, Kochi, Ahmedabad and NOIDA have dedicated traffic helpline services through Whatsapp. The Whatsapp service run by the Hyderabad Police can also be used to report traffic violations, while the North Mumbai and Bengaluru police units have Whatsapp services mainly for crime control rather than traffic management.

The researcher here couldn't find any other country around the globe where WhatApp is being used for traffic management. Many cities of the developed world such as London, New York, Sydney and Toronto were searched on the internet but no such information could be retrieved. Similarly efforts were also made to search for such services in the cities of the neighboring countries like Colombo, Dhaka and Karachi but no such initiative could be noticed. This also indicates that the police forces in India might be pioneers in utilizing such services for traffic management.

3.1.6 Helpline Services

The most conventional among the new media tools employed by the Delhi Traffic Police are the telephone helpline services run by them. These services have been there for many decades and it can be debated whether they can be termed as 'new media' at all given the fact that they are not internet based and can be accessed from the traditional landline telephones as well. However, they have been included in the study

since most helpline services around the world have been digitized and upgraded to the Interactive Voice Response Service (IVRS) based platforms.

However, it was observed that the two helpline numbers provided by the Delhi Traffic Police on their website – 0112584444 and 1095 were not very easily accessible. On most attempts made by the researcher, there was no response on these numbers or they couldn't be reached at all. When the numbers were picked, the response was polite and the relevant information was shred but the helplines do not function on the IVRS platform. The Taxi/ TSR complaint number 56767 couldn't be accessed at all.

While most of the initiatives taken by the Delhi Traffic Police using new media are praiseworthy, the management of the helpline services certainly leave a lot to be desired. The other modes of communication are mostly new age and depend on facilities such as internet and smartphones, however, for those who depend on the conventional telephone connectivity for getting the relevant information, the helpline services are of great importance. This is certainly one of the areas where there is scope for improvement.

3.1.7 Mobile Application

The Delhi Traffic Police introduced a dedicated mobile application for traffic complaints and updates in May, 2014. This free application is available on Google store and can be easily downloaded on Android platforms. The application will be available on the Windows and Apple based devices soon.

Mobile applications are downloadable content which allow the users to surf through relevant information even when the user is offline. In addition, the applications, popularly known as Apps also facilitate the transmission of updated information to the device on which it has been downloaded.
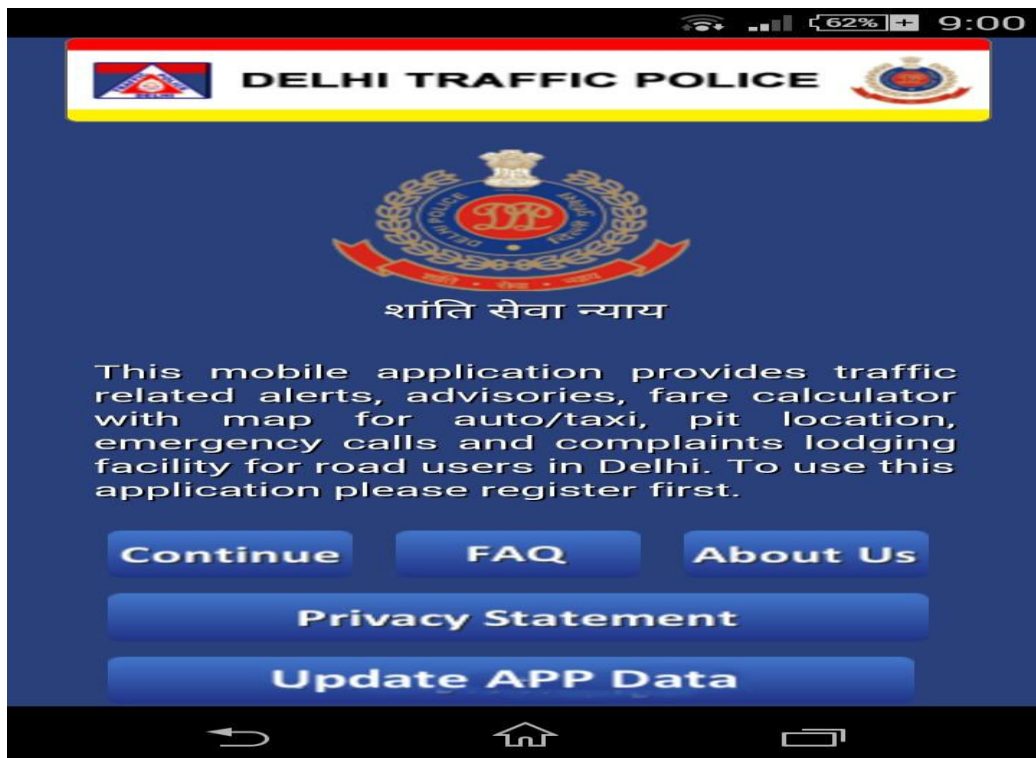
The mobile application of the Delhi Traffic Police is easy to use and has a number of features for the benefit of the users. The dashboard of the app has the following sections – Traffic Advisory, Traffic Alert, Taxi/Auto Fare, Complaints, Signal Fault, Towed vehicles, Emergency Contacts, FAQs, Offences and Lost report.

Therefore, the app is quite comprehensive and covers almost all aspects of the functioning of the Traffic Police. Traffic updates, details of taxi/ auto fares, signal

faults, towing of vehicles, emergency contacts, lodging of lost reports can all be done through this application. The app sends regular traffic updates to the users in both English and Hindi. On an average, about six to eight updates are sent to users every day. However, it must be accepted that the app is just a good beginning. It must be made compatible for all devices and more features such as downloadable traffic awareness games, videos may be added. The overall look of the app with a deep blue background may also be improved and made more attractive.

The app, developed and maintained by the IT centre, Delhi Police headquarters, is about 3.3 megabytes in size and a bit slow for some devices having lesser capacity. However, once downloaded, it is quite effective with its updates. It has already been downloaded by close to one lakh users and the users have so far given it a very impressive rating of 4.2 out of five. Out of the 1,965 users who have reviewed it (as on 11th July, 2015), a very impressive 1,091 users have given it a perfect five while, 474 users have given four stars.

Screenshot of the Delhi Traffic Police Mobile App

The utility of the mobile applications has been realized by most of the traffic police forces across the country. Only with the exception of Chennai, all other major cities of

the country such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have started official traffic related mobile applications. All these applications are fed with basic traffic updates, emergency contacts, complaint numbers etc. Internationally, the trend of government created traffic apps does not seem to be very popular. For cities like London and Toronto, there are many excellent traffic update apps, but these have been developed by private companies. The New York Police (NYPD) and Sydney Police (NSWP) have their official mobile applications, but these applications mainly for controlling crime rather than traffic. Closer home, Dhaka Police also has a mobile app but its not a specialized application for traffic management.

3.2 University of Delhi

The University of Delhi has substantial presence on the internet based platforms for communication, which we often refer to as 'new media'. Apart from a Facebook page, the university has an official YouTube channel, a website, an admission specific mobile application and of course a helpline number for students. The university doesn't have any presence on the micro blogging site Twitter though. The following are the details about the various new media tools used by the University of Delhi:

3.2.1 Facebook Page

The official Facebook page of the University of Delhi is quite popular among the students and their family members. It already has over 7.2 lakh 'likes' with more than two thousand new likes being registered every week on average. When checked last (12th July, 2015), there were about six thousand people talking about the page which is a substantial number.

However, in terms of activity, the Facebook page is utilized to update about the daily events taking place in the university especially pertaining to admissions, which attract lakhs of aspirants to the university every year. For the academic session commencing 2015, the notification regarding the beginning of the admission process has been shared by the page, some information has also been shared about the scheduling of an open session for students regarding admission, but there is no information about the release of the first cut off list or the subsequent cut off lists which are of great importance to the students. There is also no information about beginning of online admissions in the university. In 2014, when the controversy regarding the

implementation of the Four Years Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) had erupted, the official Facebook page was not utilized to convey any information either.

However, at the same time, it would be unfair to opine that the page is not updated. It has regular updates about the events taking place in the university such as seminars, workshops etc. It also has shared the results of a survey by India Today – AC Nielson, which ranks the university as the best in the country. It also congratulates the topper of the Indian Administrative Service exams this year, who happens to be an alumna of the university.

From an analysis of the Facebook page, it can be concluded that the university authorities do not intend to utilize the page to interact too much with the stakeholders. Rather they would prefer to use it to share details they are interested in sharing. As a result, a lot of contemporary issues facing the university do not find a mention in the page. This intent of the university is also clarified through the disclaimer uploaded by them.

Let's keep the comments civil, cordial and relevant to the topic, so that we can have this open space for all.

While the University shall take all possible care in ensuring the accuracy of the important that is uploaded on the site by the official University site Administrators, it shall not be responsible for any incorrect or incomplete information and the consequences of using such information. The University shall similarly not responsible for any such information posted on this site by persons other than official site Administrators.

Rules to be followed:

Comments will be monitored.

Comments containing/linking any abusive material, personal attacks, profanity or spam will be deleted. The comments can't be used as ad space. So, please don't endorse, promote or solicit on behalf of a product or service.

Advertisements on this Facebook page are not endorsed or commissioned by the University of Delhi.

The page of our university aims to make information sharing even more quick and effective. Designed with the purpose of making the University processes as transparent as possible, it aims to provide the information relating to colleges & departments, libraries & services. You will find information on admissions & examination. It provides information on the achievements of our faculty members and their research interests. You can also get information about the upcoming events like workshops, events, conferences and lectures being held across the University as well. (https://www.facebook.com/UniversityofDelhi, 2015)
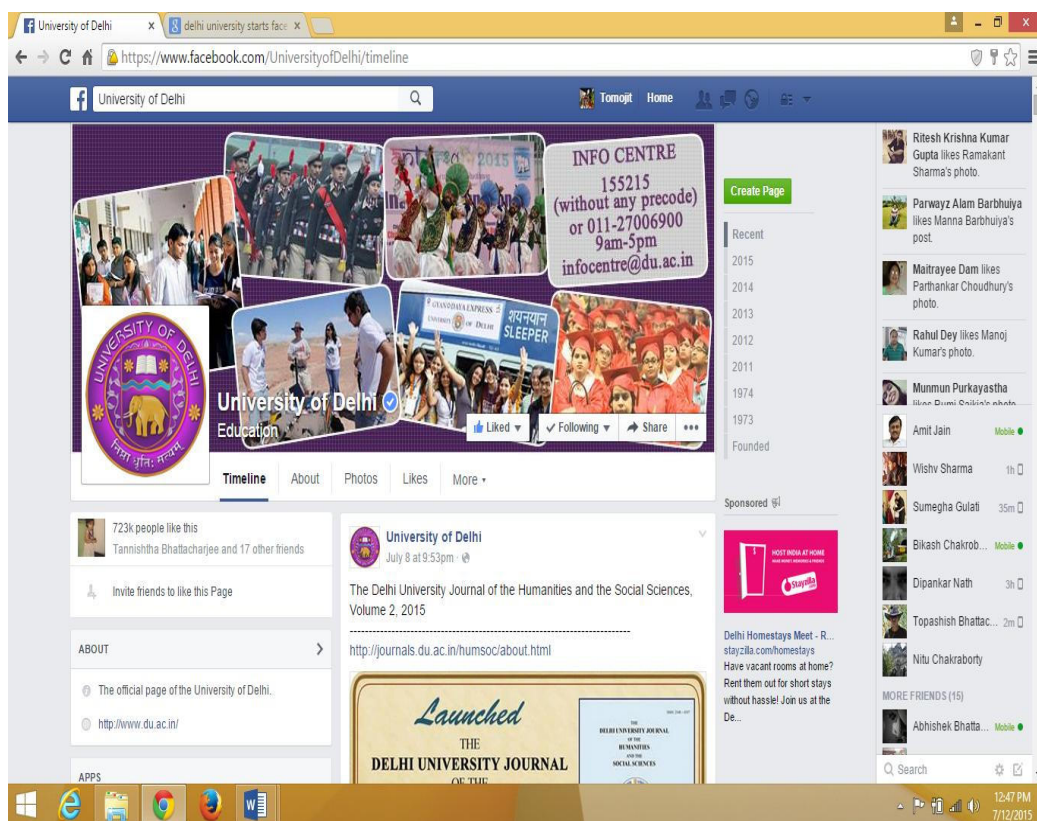
Screenshot of the Facebook page of the University of Delhi

In comparison it was found that none of the major government run universities in the major cities such as the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, University of Kolkata or the Annamalai University, Chennai had official Facebook pages. The Mumbai University has a Facebook page with only 813 likes and a Twitter handle with only 50 followers (as on 12th July, 2015). Most of the private universities, in contrast have properly maintained social media presence. The prominent names such as Amity

University, Lovely Professional University and Sharda University have Facebook as well as Twitter pages and social media is aggressively used to attract students towards them.

On the international front, it was observed that most of the universities of international repute world over have official social media presence. These pages have huge traffic and queries from all over the world. The Facebook pages of the University of Oxford and the Harvard University had queries from all corners of the globe and they were being addressed by a dedicated team on a regular basis. However, most of the universities in the Indian sub continent outside India did not have official presence on Facebook.

Table 3.5

| Name of the University	Number of 'Likes' on Facebook (as on 12th July, 2015)
University of Oxford	23 lakhs
Harvard University	40 lakhs
University of Melbourne	1.45 lakhs
Columbia University	2.2 lakhs
University of Minnesota	1.53 lakhs
University of Dhaka	No official Facebook page
University of Karachi	No official Facebook page

3.2.2 YouTube Channel

The official YouTube channel of the University of Delhi can be accessed on https://www.youtube.com/user/UniversityDelhi. Dedicated YouTube channels can be utilized for sharing videos of seminars, symposia, lectures etc as well as video streaming of important events. For any educational institution, having a YouTube channel is a beneficial idea. However, a study of the YouTube channel of the University of Delhi reveals that there has been no activity on the channel for the last many months.

The last video was posted on the channel over five months back. The description of the page says, "Reaching out to student strength of more than 2 lakhs in the regular classroom courses, and another 3 lakhs in the distance learning mode, the University of Delhi is the hub of dynamic pedagogy, research innovation and premiere learning.

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Started in 1922 with only three colleges, the University today has over 70 colleges that have undergraduate courses in Humanities, Social Sciences, Commerce and Sciences, and over 80 post graduate departments. Consistently ranked as the number one university in India and recently rated among the top 100 in the world, the University of Delhi showcases the benefits of diversity and inclusive education. The University offers state-of-the-art higher education, forging significant national and international trends through its people and programmes." (www.youtube.com/user/UniversityDelhi, 2015)

In terms of content, the channel has only two videos uploaded. Since starting in April, 2014, the channel has received only 361 subscriptions (as on 12th July, 2015) and little over two thousand views. Therefore, obviously, the potential of the medium has not been utilized at all. In fact, social media presence can become rather embarrassing if not used properly. The Youtube link is provided on the home page of the university website, yet it is not updated. The university has faculty of great quality and many experts keep visiting to participate in many programmes. The entire academia could have benefitted at lot if their deliberations had been regularly updated on the channel.
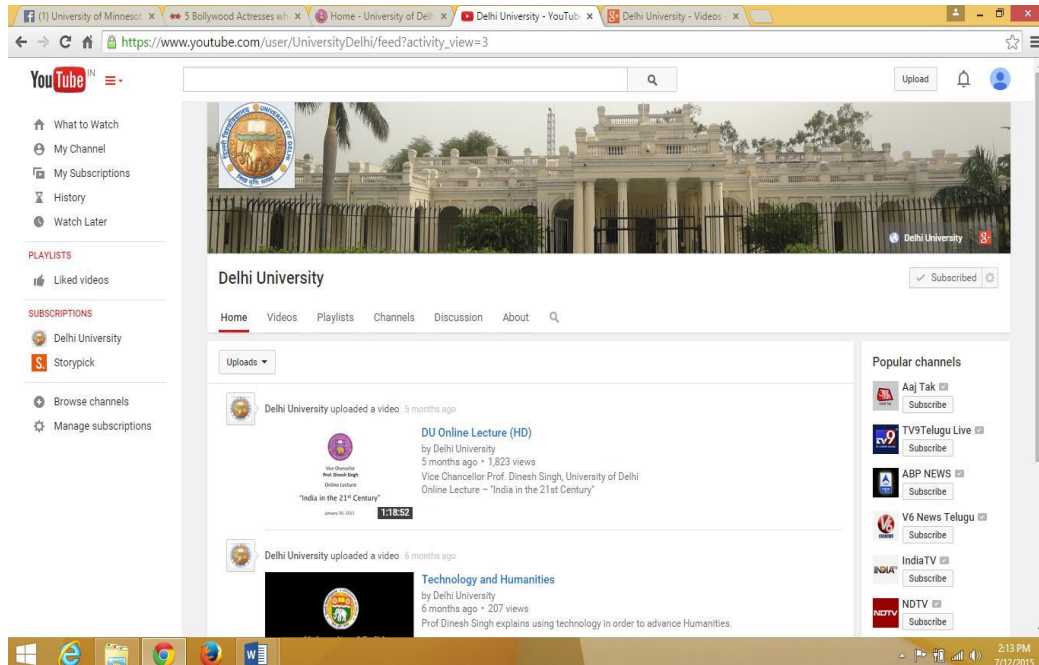
Screenshot of the Youtube channel of the University of Delhi

As expected, at the national level, none of the other major government run universities of the country have Youtube channels. In comparison again, the private

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universities such as Amity University and Sharda University have official Youtube channels where apart from the academic discourses, they also upload videos of student fests and concerts, which helps in attracting more students. On the international front again, most of the reputed universities had Youtube channels with large number of subscriptions and regular activity.

Table 3.6

Name of the University	Number of 'Subscriptions' on Youtube channel (as on 12th July, 2015)
University of Oxford	41,988
Harvard University	2.33 lakhs
University of Melbourne	8,163
Columbia University	22,749
University of Minnesota	8,577
University of Dhaka	No official Youtube Channel
University of Karachi	No official Youtube Channel

3.2.3 University of Delhi Website

The website of the University of Delhi – www.du.ac.in, does not quite look like a traditional website of a government run university. It is aesthetically designed and includes all the vital links conveniently on the home page, without cluttering the look. For example, for the examination season of 2015, it features important information such as the admission cut off lists prominently on the home page on the 'Latest' section. Similarly, other relevant information about the session ahead is displayed prominently.

In the 'news' section, information about the upcoming guest lectures, seminars, workshops have been provided. Links to the university's e-journals, student radio stations etc are also there apart from the routine information generally available on all such sites such as departments, faculty, about the university, exams and results, libraries, amenities etc. Overall, the site is dynamic and gives the visitor an impression that the university is a busy institution with lots of activities taking place both in the academic sphere as well as the extra-curricular activities.

Interestingly, there are two sections for the journalists. One is the 'Press Release' section, where the press releases and statements have been uploaded and the other is

the 'In Media' section, where links to important news coverage about the university has been provided. This clearly shows that the university intends to utilize the website for maintaining good media relations as well.

Some of the links such as the 'Best Publication' link in the 'Research' section is under preparation. The publications link is expected to function on the website of one of India's best universities. However, the Research section is pretty exhaustive and covers a lot of vital details including the information about the 'Shodhganga' project of the University Grants Commision (UGC) under which all doctoral research works are to be posted online in the 'Shodhganga' repository.

The link to the University Information Centre (UIC) has been provided which gives all details about the university such as its programmes, the campuses, Facebook links etc. It is a microsite with the url - http://uic.du.ac.in/index2.html. The links for the other micro sites such as the Cluster Innovation Centre (CIC) – for the encouragement of innovation in research and the Community Radio station have also been provided.

The 'Webcast' section has a number of videos of important lectures and events. There is no photo gallery as such, but plenty of photographs of the campuses as well as the previous vice chancellors can be seen in the 'Media Gallery' section. The 'Studio Lecture' section is another interesting link, as it features a few lectures shot and recorded from the university studios.

The 'Alumni' section is well designed and displays photographs of the first and the last convocation ceremonies of the university. It also proudly shares the information that 25 of its alumni have received the prestigious Padma awards in the last five year with the names and photographs of some of the winners. It also shows the names of the alumni who have featured in the civil service merit list this time. However, there was no provision to facilitate the online meeting or interaction of the university alumni through the website.
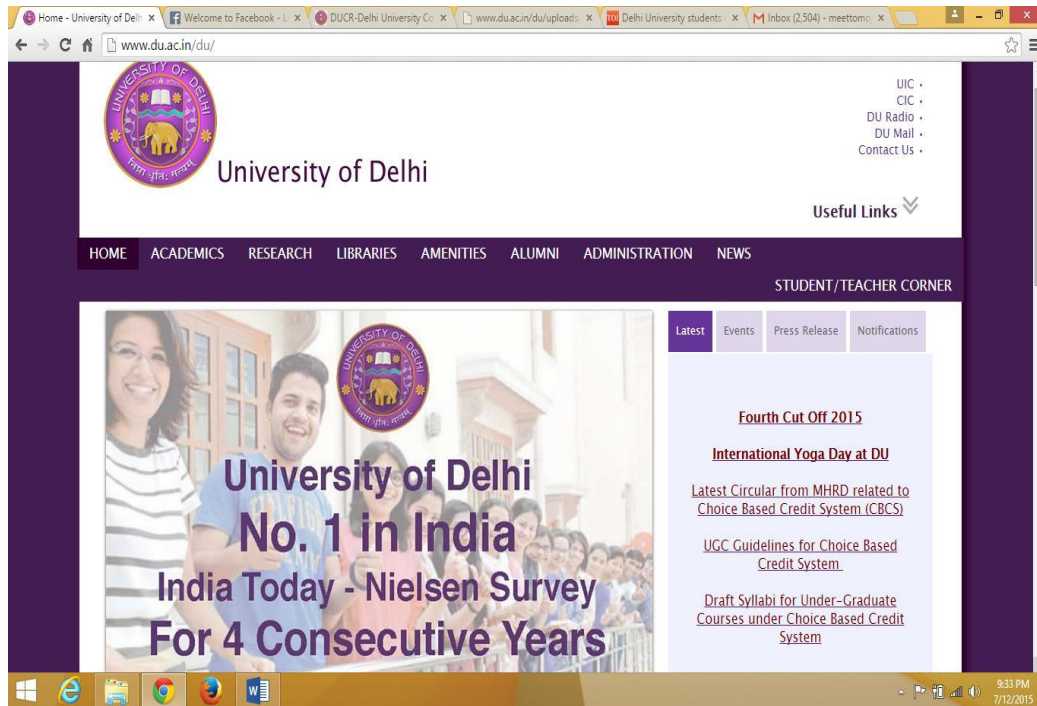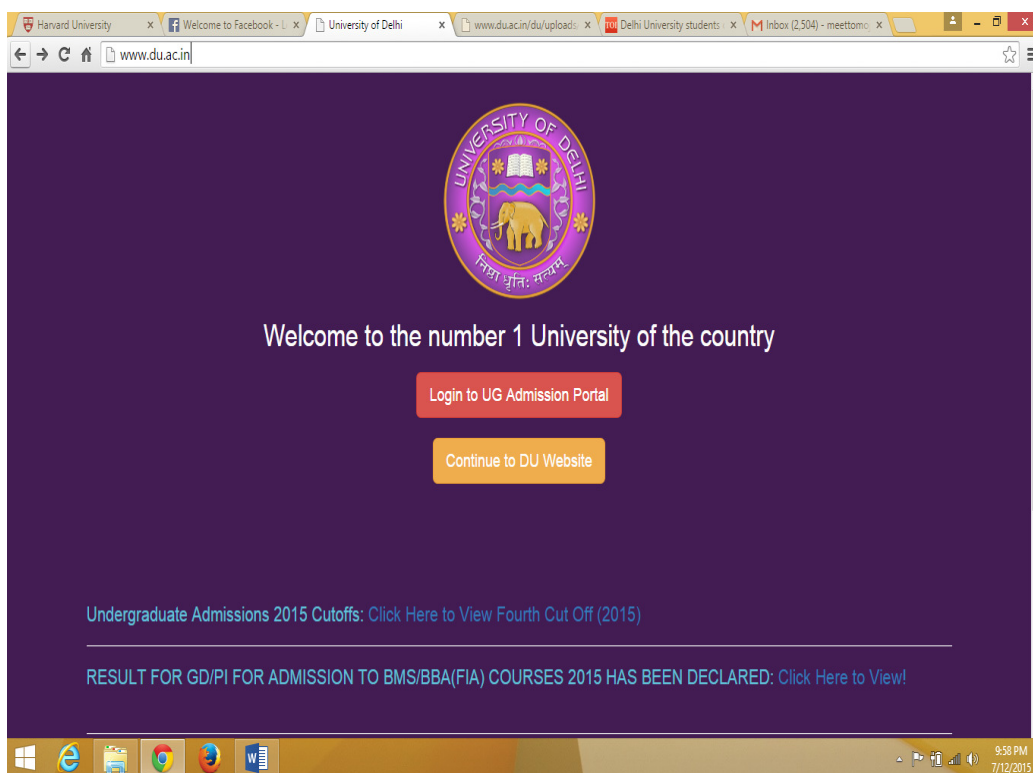
Screenshot of the University of Delhi Website

The websites of the other prominent government universities of the nation – the universities of Mumbai, Calcutta as well as the Annamalai University, Chennai and the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi were also studied thoroughly to compare the efficacy of the University of Delhi website. It was observed that the websites of the other universities were much more traditional in their look and were not as attractive as the website under study. The websites of some of private universities were also studies. It seemed that those websites were more focused on attracting new students rather than providing information related to all aspects of the functioning of the university.

However, the website has much to improve in comparison to the websites of the globally renowned institutions such as the University of Oxford or the Harvard University. These websites are beautifully designed with stories about the important research programmes of the students, the CSR activities, sports, cultural activities etc. Rather than looking like academic websites, these sites look like independent news portals with information about so many diverse activities – all of course related to the university.

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3.2.4 Online Admission Portal

For the first ever occasion, online admissions were introduced for the under graduate courses commencing in 2015. For this purpose, an online admission portal with the url- http://www.ug.du.ac.in/2015/index.php/site/login was given. The online procedure, already available with many Indian and international universities was received very well by the students. Just after logging in to the University of Delhi website, link to the online site was provided. The ones interested to visit the university website could also do so by pressing the relevant link. A similar Post Graduate admission portal was also started last year.

Screenshot of the home page link to the online admission portal

3.2.5 Undergraduate Admission Mobile Application

In 2014, the University of Delhi launched a mobile application on Android to help students aspiring to take admission in the university. The app contained all relevant information about the institution, its courses, important dates etc. however, it may be added that there are many privately designed mobile applications which are quite comprehensive with their information about the admission season. A search on the

Google playstore shows at least eight to ten similar applications which claim to have the necessary information about the university.

The University of Mumbai also has designed a mobile application for its students for mobiled operated on the Android platform. However, no such initiative could be observed from the other major government universities of the country. The privately run Amity University, with its app called Amizone, claims to be the first ever university in India to design a mobile application for the students. (http://www.amity.edu/app/, 2015)

3.2.6 Helplines

The University of Delhi runs helpline services for the students from where important information about the admission procedure as well as other details can be sought. Two separate numbers with multiple lines – 155215 (without precode) and 011-27006900 can be reached by the students from Monday to Friday from 9 AM till 5 pm. During the undergraduate admission seasons every year, these helpline numbers receive approximately 300 calls every week.

To conclude, it may be said that both the Delhi Traffic Police as well as the University of Delhi must be complemented for introducing new media tools in their public relations exercises. Communication with the external world, reaching out to the target audience is after all the motive of every public relations professional and if new media can effectively solve this purpose then certainly they should be implemented.

However, this is certainly not to opine that there is no scope for improvement. The Delhi Traffic Police has done well to maintain many new media tools at the same time such as the website, helplines, Facebook and Twitter pages, Whatsapp service and the mobile application. However, it has discontinued its SMS based traffic alert system which had become very popular with the subscribers. Along with the existing social media devices, it can also make use of the photo sharing service called Instagram by producing photographs of traffic offenders or to highlight the common traffic offences such as crossing of the zebra crossing by vehicles while waiting at red signals.

The University of Delhi also is not using new media to its potential. While its website has a good look and easy to access content, the same cannot be said about the social media pages. The Facebook page is updated on crucial issues facing the institution,

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negative feedback is deleted and criticism is not appreciated. While every institution holds the right to regulate content on its own social media page, but the inherent democratic nature of social media with its potential for debate and discussions must not be curbed.

In addition, the YouTube channel is also not updated regularly. The YouTube channel could have been a very effective medium to reach out to the students who are keen to listen to a particular lecture for better understanding. Most surprisingly, the university also doesn't have a Twitter handle, which again could have been another medium to reach out to the students.

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