

Chapter 4

OVERALL IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA ON THE INDIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SCENARIO

Even as this study endeavours to evaluate how the new media tools can benefit the public relations practitioners in the Indian public sector, it must be accepted that new media has already emerged as one of main constituents of the functioning of public relations in the corporate sphere. The public relations agencies as well as the corporate communications establishments which employ them have realized the infinite potential of the new media in communicating their messages across to the target audience.

Abandon preconceived notions about public relations (PR). Today, public relations is a cross-platform communications action reliant upon traditional and digital PR strategies, as well as social engagement, content marketing, brand publishing, media relations, inbound content, SEO strategies and limitless creativity.

Today, PR includes social media, blogging, online reputation management, brand journalism, content strategies, thought leadership and more. PR is now an extremely broad and diversified field – it is no longer anchored to crisis communications, press releases and media alerts. (Alonso, 2014)

With the opening up of the Indian economy in the early nineties, the Indian growth story gained great momentum. With the entry of many multinationals and the massive expansion of business within the country, the public relations sector also got a much needed boost. At the same time, the media industry of the country moved beyond the handful of newspapers and state run television and radio channels and provided the viewer with multiple round the clock news watching options. The internet further enriched the media scenario, and dissemination of news got another medium. With the arrival of the new millennium, the advent of social media again added another dimension to the whole business of news.

The public relations sector of the country, which was primarily engaged in the business of generating media coverage could not have remained aloof to these developments. The public relations industry of the country grew by leaps and bounds to meet these new challenges. According to a report by the industry body ASSOCHAM in 2012, the Indian public relations industry then was growing at a phenomenal rate of 32 percent annually.

The start of the 24 hours television news cycle in India in the mid 2000s and the rise of the brash, young and lightning fast TV reporter in India, hurled the PR industry in India, head first, into facing the biggest communications challenge it had ever seen. This was the point where the PR industry in India was just beginning to get the attention of the global PR agencies. Today, the big Indian PR agency with the international tie up and even ownership has firmly arrived in India, a 21st century trend first seen in the Chinese PR industry in the 1980s. (“The growth of Indian public relations,” 2012)

“Advertising costs are rising, the reach is getting narrower, users are overloaded with ads; and all that leads to lower efficiency of advertising. Therefore, marketing is increasingly using various PR techniques. It can be expected, that the efficiency of PR will exceed the efficiency of classical advertising. The role of PR is changing from reactive to a more active one.” (Lindic, 2006)

The advent of the internet further changed the manner in which the Indian public relations industry functioned. Now, media coverage didn't only mean the appearance of news in the newspapers next morning or the evening news bulletin on television or radio, it also meant appearance on the popular news portals. All the major newspapers, television channels promptly opened their own websites and another struggle for supremacy began, this time on the virtual world.

“In the past, publicizing your message was limited to those with financial resources to access mass media. The emergence of low cost and highly accessible communication tools, however, has changed all of this. Now anyone with an internet connection has the ability to share their message with a worldwide audience.

PR Professionals must be conversant in all elements of communication. And in the 21st century no communications element is more important than the internet.” (Grabowski, 2012)

In the late nineties and the beginning of the new millennium, the penetration of internet in India was among the lowest in the world, but it still reached a sizeable portion of the urban population, especially in the metropolitan cities. Therefore, the public relations practitioners couldn't ignore their efficacy. Websites offering email services as well as information and entertainment, such as Yahoo and Rediff gained great popularity along with the news portals of the prominent newspaper and television channels.

However, despite the proliferation of the news portals, the skill sets of the public relations professionals did not require any major change in comparison to the days of conventional media. The only major change was that now the news required to reach the media houses much faster and no reporter could afford to leisurely write about an incident only in the evening for getting printed in the following day's edition. Faster dissemination of news had already been necessitated by the advent of the 24X7 news channels and the internet further increased the importance of speed in sending information across to newspapers.

The entry of the social media around 2004-05 has now completely changed the way public relations strategies are executed. The print and electronic media continue to be important, but it is social media through which the target audience is reached directly and immediate feedback is received.

“Social media is media for social interaction as a superset beyond social communication. Enabled by ubiquitously accessible and scalable communication techniques, social media has substantially changed the way organizations, communities, and individuals communicate. Social media takes on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking.” (Baruah, 2012)

“...social media now affords brands the opportunity to present a statement immediately and simultaneously across several platforms, address a mass audience with the most up-to-date information, and interact with consumers directly.

This brings traditional public relations to a new level. For example, the Tylenol brand could now warn consumers immediately to cease using their capsules, could answer questions and concerns on a personal level, and could keep its audiences informed on the situation as it developed.

By maintaining this new form of public relations, audiences are going to be more inclined to not only give the brand a chance, but remain loyal” (“Social media’s role in modern public relations,” 2013)

Mobile applications have added another option for the public relations practitioners to convey their messages. Many companies, organisations are adopting this new technology as a marketing tool while some are using it as a service tool, but since these apps can effectively convey information across to the target audience, they are very capable public relations tools as well. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the combination of the internet and mobile telephony based technologies are now driving business world over, often across financial and social divides and public relations as a profession has also joined the other sectors in effectively using these new technologies.

4.1 New Media Usage in the Indian Public Relations Industry

New media today forms a very important ingredient of any public relations campaign in India. In many cases where the target audience is urban and young, the new media component of the entire Public Relations campaign may well be half of the entire budget. In fact, with the increasing popularity of new media, many public relations experts are pointing out obvious drawbacks of transmitting news through traditional media, about which nothing much could be done earlier in the absence of the social media and mobile based options. The following is an attempt to analyse how the public relations is functioning through new media in India.

4.1.1 The Business of New Media as a Public Relations Tool

Right in the initial stages of planning a public relations campaign, the client is often asked about the number of people, he intends to reach through the new media tools. The strategists have to decide whether want the social media campaign to be launched purely through personal contacts or through the buying of 'likes' and 'followers'. In case the concerned organization intends to launch its social media campaign without any buying of 'likes' or 'followers', the chances are high that the intended message would at least reach a few thousand people. However, in case the 'likes' and 'followers' are bought, they can be achieved according to the necessity or target set by the organization.

All prominent social media sites like Facebook and Twitter facilitate that. In exchange of a fee, they promote the concerned page and invite subscribers to like or follow them. For example, Facebook charges an amount of Rs. 128 per day for eight to 31 'likes' for a page. The deal can be for a week, a month or even more. Preferences according to target audience such as age group, gender and interest areas can also be specified. ("Delhi Metro Museum", 2015)

In addition, much like media buying agencies, social media buying agencies have also surfaced. These agencies tie up with the marketing or public relations companies and arrange 'likes' or 'followers' according to the requirement. According to a public relations professional, these agencies functioning in Delhi generally charge about ten thousand rupees for arranging one lakh 'likes' or 'followers'. They deal with the social media website concerned and pitch the new post for the people.

Once a page, status, tweet or individual's profile is commercially pitched, it is displayed on the accounts of a large number of subscribers. In Facebook, there are links such as 'You may know', 'You may like' or the 'sponsored pages'. Similarly, in Twitter, there are links such as 'promoted by', 'sponsored by' etc. The pages, profiles etc are featured on those links giving them far more visibility than the other pages or profiles.

Once these are featured on the pages of the users, the chances of people liking them or following them increases manifold. For Twitter, the probability of the promoted

pages getting liked or followed is about 2.5 to three percent, while for Facebook, the rate is about five percent.

However, much more than the 'likes' and 'followers', the real reach of a page or a post is assessed through the number of 'shares' on Facebook and 'Retweet' on Twitter. In addition, the number of comments also decide whether a social media effort has really paid dividends. While a user may like a post or page just after a cursory or casual look, a share, a comment or a retweet would surely mean that he has read the post thoroughly. In the process, the possibility of garnering negative comments also exists. For tackling this issue, many organisations monitor the comments continuously and meticulously delete the abuses or complaints while many steadfastly reply to them. The new media experts in the public relations teams are assigned to monitor the presence on social media on a round the clock basis so that negative publicity or criticism can be avoided.

Another interesting way to promote a page is to get the celebrities to share them or retweet them. Most of the celebrities like cine actors, sportsmen have millions of followers on social media. If they agree to promote a certain post or page, immediately the message would reach millions of their followers. For example, for the promotion of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), which is held in Goa every year, big cinema actors are often pulled in to comment or tweet about them. Even prominent film critics, directors are roped in for the job. On most occasions, it is done a gesture of cooperation, on many, money is also charged.

Nowadays, websites and mobile applications are also planned to disseminate the information to the target audience. While most organisations have their own websites, microsites are created to promote certain products, campaigns etc. Then, the links of these sites are shared on the social media platforms. The hits on the websites and the number of comments in the feedback sections are also effective indicators of the success or failure of a certain message that has been conveyed.

In case of mobile applications also, the number of downloads can be easily calculated which conveys whether the app has been received well by the target audience. Nowadays, for the service industry like insurance and online retail, apps have become a potent medium to not only push sales but also gauge whether a certain product has been well received. In order to increase the number of downloads, most organisations

try to make apps for all the mobile platforms such as Andriod, Apple, Blackberry and Windows.

Another new media tool which is attracting the focus of the public relations practitioners is the practice of blogging. Initially, blogging was seen purely as non-commercial activity which allowed people to write their views, opinions and put on the web. But with the passage of time, now blogging has emerged as a full time profession with dedicated blogs on a range of topics. These blogs are so powerful, that negative feedback in them about a certain product can badly damage the business prospects since the information shared by these blogs are taken very seriously by the readers.

There are a range of blogs which review new mobile phones, electronic items, books, films, automobiles and so on. Over a period of time, these blogs have attained a lot of credibility, often more than the conventional news media. Therefore, public relations practitioners now also factor in their presence while planning public relations campaigns. Blogger meets are organized for niche bloggers who are given presentations about niche products and services and then they review them in their blogs. For example, www.indianautosblog.com, is an automobile related blog which extensively covers the nation's automobile industry. All major car launches, controversies are covered by the blogs which gets thousands of hits every day. In such a scenario, no public relations agency with an automobile client can afford to ignore this particular blog.

Similarly, www.bangaloreaviation.com, is a popular aviation sector blog which reports in details about the proceedings in the aviation sector. All the sectors have such dedicated blogs which have tremendous readership and the benefit of reaching out to them is that through them, the organisations can directly reach the customer base because, these blogs would be read by only specific readers and not random readers as may be the case with traditional media.

In addition, some more new age methods are being adopted to take the message more effectively to the target audience. Search engine optimization is one of them. Now-a-days, it is common practice to search for certain information on the search engines like Google. In order to reach out to the maximum number of people through Google before the other contenders on the web, the public relations planners go for search

engine optimization. That is, the content developers of the websites, social media posts are directed to develop the content in such a way that the weblink features prominently on the searches made on the search engines.

For example, if a web content is being developed for a new sedan car entering the market, the crucial key words expected to be used while searching online for such a product such as sedan, new, car, mileage, comfort etc should be used in the web content in such a manner that whenever a search is done about such products on the net, the concerned web link emerges on the top of the search ahead of the other similar links.

Geo targeting is another new age tool which is now being used widely in India. Though more of a marketing or even advertising tool, geo targeting is done to identify the location of the user and provide location relevant data to him. This is done by either determining the physical location of the user or through the locations searched by the user. For example, if a user searches for airline tickets repeatedly between Delhi and Silchar, then geo targeting will help identify the person and feature advertisements of travel booking websites with fares of this route. This is not a public relations tool as such but is used for reaching out to the target audience never the less.

4.1.2 Change in Skill Sets for Public Relations Professionals

About a couple of decades ago, there was practically no course specifically teaching public relations to the students. Gradually, public relations became a part of the study of Mass Communication and then even attained its own independent character as an academic discourse. Today, there are many post graduate diploma courses in advertising and public relations and even prestigious government institutions such as the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) offer them.

Traditionally, these courses deal with crucial aspects of the profession such as the art of writing press releases, communication skills to reach out to the target audience, event management skills for organizing successful campaigns and so on. Even today, the nature of the curriculum of these courses hasn't changed so much.

However, in the last one decade, another expertise has become very important to become a successful public relations professional and that's the knowhow of working in the social media. Every prospective job seeker in the industry must acquire the

necessary expertise to launch and run public relations campaigns through the social media for no public relations strategy can today be planned or executed without the use of the internet based platforms.

Every public relations professional today must know how to promote a product on social media. In addition, a clear idea about which social media site should be used to launch which product, what contents must the mobile application have to attract more downloaders must be there. Another important requirement is the idea about social media budgeting, that is knowhow about how more ‘likes’ and ‘followers’ can be generated by dealing with the concerned buying agencies and generating a buzz about the product concerned.

“Public relations professionals are known for their proactive attitudes, perseverance in pitching the media, a thick skin when it comes to rejection and the ability to build relationships, as well as their great oral and written skills. These are all important KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities) you need to be successful in public relations. However, social media has changed the way that public relations professionals approach the strategy and implementation of their public relations programs. Today, social media requires that we expand our KSAs for continued success in our public relations roles.

Social media causes us to think, prepare and act differently in our roles. Our knowledge has increased, and we’re sharpening our skills and abilities. These expanded KSAs allow us to be more strategic to guide public interactions with our companies and to spearhead social media within our own organizations.” (Breakenridge, 2014)

Social media is reinventing the public relations playbook – and bringing with it the potential to raise the corporate profile of PR professionals. After all, PR professionals are among those who have pioneered the frontiers of social media.

To meet the challenge of their industries being “rebuilt around social engagement” – and to raise the profile of PR in the process – PR professionals must commit to lifelong learning, since the state-of-the-art for PR in social

media is likely to continue evolving rapidly for years to come. (“Mastering Public Relations in Social Media,” 2013)

New media has today emerged as a very potent tool for marketing as well, probably much more than a public relations tool, because of its instant reach and relatively lower expenditure. Therefore, to train the professionals dealing with marketing, innumerable digital marketing courses have emerged all over the country. These courses provide inputs in designing digital media, pitching products or services through them, social media usage, social media budgeting etc. Since public relations is a related field, these courses are much sought after today for public relations professionals as well.

These courses are available both online as well as through classrooms. Most of them are short term in nature starting from weekly modules to monthly, bi-monthly, six monthly and even yearlong courses. While focus solely on digital marketing, some others also deal in details with the more creative aspects such as digital design. Many institutions, both government and private offer these programmes. The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) in Ahmedabad and Lucknow offer short term courses on digital media marketing. NIIT, the reputed computer training franchise also has many custom made courses with digital media as the main topic.

“Worldwide, the search interest in digital/online marketing courses has been in a steady up trend (or a secular bull market if you are a markets enthusiast) since the latter half of 2006. In India, the trend caught on late during the end of 2011 but since then, has seen a steady rise. With the growing internet penetration and social media popularity, this can only be expected to rise further.

To cater to the growing need for these courses, a number of companies and organizations have started various courses on Digital marketing. Digital marketing is a broad field and comprises various disciplines including Display ads, Search Engine Marketing(SEM) and Search Engine Optimization(SEO), Social Media marketing(SMM), Email marketing, Mobile Marketing and Affiliate Marketing. Each of these is a field in itself and there are field-specific courses being offered as well. Some of the courses come with certifications recognized by various bodies. Certification definitely cannot substitute for hands-on industry experience but,

nevertheless, can add to the CV of a fresher making an entry into the field.” (“Digital marketing courses in India,” 2013)

Many other organisations such as Edukart, Digital Vidya, Digital Academy India, Market Motive etc offer these courses to thousands of professionals keen to further specialize and increase their expertise. Some of these institutions also run courses very specific to the requirements in public relations.

“Market Motive, co-founded in 2008 by American entrepreneur and Google Digital Marketing Evangelist Avinash Kaushik, provides online education and certification in six disciplines – Search Engine Optimization, Paid Search Advertising, Social Media, Web Analytics, Conversion & Public Relations.” (“Digital marketing courses in India,” 2013)

While the marketing professionals might be more interested in promoting their product to the target audience, a public relations professional also has to ensure that the negative response of the target audience (if any) is immediately countered so that the traditional media doesn’t feed from those responses. While now there are only short term courses dealing with digital media including social media, the time is not far when there will be full-fledged degree courses [dealing with these issues since there will be further rapid growth in this sector. This is probably the single largest change in skill sets that has dawned upon the public relations industry ever since it matured into a full-fledged profession.

4.1.3 New Media Component in the Public Relations Strategies

While planning public relations strategies, the clients now are often asked how much new media do they require in addition to the employment of the traditional media tools. This decision depends on a number of factors such as the target audience, the nature of the product or service and the available budget.

Even a couple of years ago, the new media component in a public relations campaign was at best 25 percent. However, the scenario has now significantly changed. For products like electronic items, mobile phones, automobiles etc, new media publicity has become imperative and therefore, the new media component in such campaigns is as high as fifty percent. In case of the hospitality industry also, new media component is very high because a lot of hotel or restaurant goes surf the internet to find feedback

before visiting hotels or restaurants. In fact, in a few years time, such high new media components will become the norm for all kinds of campaigns as the penetration of the internet would breach the barriers of the urban and educated population and reach new grounds in the rural belts as well.

A couple of decades ago, if a major car manufacturer had to launch a new car in the market, it would organize a grand press conference, invite a large group of journalists to a five star hotel and spend considerable amount of money in entertaining them. After the press conference, the public relations team would chase the journalists, request them for good coverage and then silently hope that the news is carried properly.

Come 2015 and the entire strategy has undergone transformation. Now a lot of companies are going for 'soft launches', where they do not straightaway go for lavish launches, rather promote the product gradually in a more subtle manner. For an automobile launch, a group of automobile bloggers with considerable following would be called for a quiet presentation in some café and the bloggers in turn would cover the vehicle in their blogs, mobile applications, which in turn would be shared extensively by the concerned organization on social media. This way, it would be much easier to control the transmission of information and the message would reach the people who matter. They might still go for a grand press conference later, but by that time the necessary buzz will already have been created and the press coverage invariably would be more positive if the earlier feedback is good.

For example, American car maker Ford, which has global market, and a number of models in the markets has launched a few of its models exclusively through social media. The campaigns are aided by high quality films about the products, dedicated mobile applications and efforts to reach out to the target audience through the social media.

“Ford does not want to stick to the tried and tested approach to car launches and plans to put social media at the heart of all marketing for its upcoming vehicles worldwide.

The car maker is feeling the pressure in an industry where many brands are jockeying for domination of the social media arena. To pull away from the crowd, it is changing the way it builds excitement for its new cars.

Mark Truby, vice president of European communications at Ford, told The Drum the social media first strategy is emblematic of its shift from a model “primarily of media relations” to one “primarily of storytelling”.

He means that whereas coverage in car magazines and on TV shows would have traditionally secured the bulk of the media spend, now Ford believes social media can sustain that excitement over a longer period of time among a bigger pool of fans. Word of mouth is Ford’s focus and so influencers rather than paid media or ads are how it wants to get cut through - a reflection of PR’s impact on the wider marketing for its latest cars.” (“Ford wants make all car launches social media first campaigns,” 2015)

For the launch of the Ford Aspire car, which hit the market recently, the company had launched a digital campaign with the hashtag ‘whatdrivesyou’. The campaign tried to engage with the young professionals who were the company’s target audience. The campaign, with actor Farhan Akhtar as the brand ambassador, had young achievers mostly entrepreneurs featuring in drive by interviews in the car with the actor. The company had launched its products through many such new media campaigns in the past also.

“All the stories have been compiled into a YouTube playlist and are also available on the campaign website. Viewers can share their stories through the site. User stories have been displayed alongside positive attributes like Ambition, Passion, Inventiveness, Adventure, to add to the types of passion people are driven by. Stories can be shared on Twitter, Facebook or Google Plus.” (“Ford Figo Aspire whatdrivesyou campaign,” 2015)

In the mobile sector also, there are many such examples where public relations campaigns have been launched via the new media tools such as social media, websites, blogs, mobile applications etc. Especially, many Chinese mobile manufacturers are relying on online sales only and promoting their products via social media and blogs. In many cases it has been observed that the print media is taking cue from the buzz in the social media and generating stories.

According to Mr. Jaideep Mehta, Managing Director, South Asia at International Data Corporation (IDC), “Xiaomi, Gionee and Lenovo have largely overcome the

perception challenge. Their buyers are the Generation X and they know the pulse of these consumers. They have given them feature-rich phones, and have also used the social media well.” (“Chinese mobile phone makers storm India,” 2015)

During the heydays of traditional media, the public relations, advertising and marketing departments used to work almost in isolation. While the public relations people focused on getting the right coverage in the media, the advertising team tried to create the perfect advertising campaign and the marketing team used both these tools to sell the product to the customer. However, after the entry of the social media, the line of difference between these inter related professions has blurred to a considerable extent. Now advertising, marketing and public relations can all be combined through a campaign in new media since with social media, mobile applications, websites etc at our disposal, we neither need the traditional media, nor the costly advertisements and certainly not the smooth talking marketing professionals.

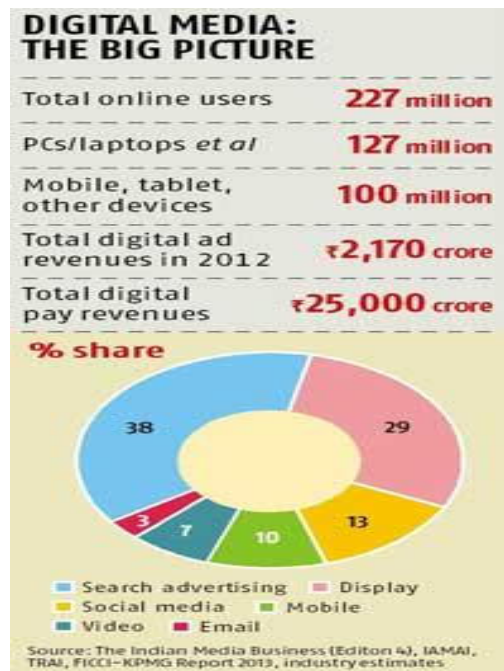
“PR has had to evolve rapidly in the past several years due to the mass adoption of online communication channels (Facebook, Twitter) and the explosion of traditional media’s online publications, online-only publications like virtual magazines, and user-generated publishing tools like blogs, Instagram, and Pinterest. These new communication tools often stand at the intersection of advertising, marketing and even customer service, which has led to an increasingly blurred line between what public relations should manage. In its most optimized form, these communication channels lead to greater, more integrated collaboration and campaign development with other communication departments.” (“The difference between pr marketing and advertising,” 2013)

4.1.4 New Media Industry in India

In this study, an effort is being made to evaluate the utility of new media as a tool of public relations. However, apart from its use as a medium of public relations, new media is today a full fledged industry with active roles in the marketing, news and entertainment sectors as well. Most of the new media tools are based on digital and internet based platforms and therefore, the terms ‘new media’ and ‘digital media’ are often used almost parrallely conveying the same meaning and connotation.

The digital media market of India has grown exponentially in the last few years. Online entertainment, news etc are playing the role of catalysts of the development of this sector. Social media, which is used extensively by the public relations industry also is increasing its presence with the rapid increase in internet penetration and the use of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

The digital media market today boasts of over 220 million users and revenues of more than ₹ 25,000 crores. (“Digital media picks up pace in India,” 2013)



Source: http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/digital-media-picks-up-pace-in-india-113071801152_1.html

Keeping in view the tremendous business potential of this sector, innumerable digital media companies have come up. While all news based, entertainment websites would come under the ambit of the digital media world, there are many digital media marketing organizations which are providing digital media solutions to both marketing as well as public relations companies. Most of these organizations offer integrated marketing as well as communications solutions to the clients.

Some of these companies are – Webchutney, Windchimes Communication, Sparrowi, Blue Digital, Media2win etc. All metropolitan cities have such agencies which specialize in creating content for social media and then communicating them to the

maximum number of audiences. The Public Relations agencies now-a-days maintain digital or new media arms which primarily liaison with these agencies for the social media activities of their clients.

According to the digital media blog, www.soravjain.com, the number of digital media marketing organizations has increased from about 50 in 2011 to about 300 in 2015 indicating the exponential growth in this sector. “This number is growing now – we have about 300 Digital Marketing agencies in India and surprisingly most of them have varied clientele – which confirms Industries are finding digital marketing as an important integration to their marketing mix.” (“Indian social media digital marketing agencies,” 2015)

These companies provide custom made solutions to the clients, which include social media buying, campaign creation, monitoring and analytics, reputation management, customized app development, blogger services, search engine optimization etc.

“Apart from using traditional media, social media now is becoming an integral part of marketing strategy for almost all brands and personalities. Social media lets you connect and build one-to-one relation with your customers. However, it can also have a reverse impact if not used appropriately.

Most of the brands and personalities use atleast one of the social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or Instagram. It helps you in building your brand as well as driving traffic to you website.

Social media and digital marketing agencies can become the best assistance to you in making seamless use of social media.” (“Social media digital marketing agencies India,” 2015)

4.1.5 New Media as a Tool of Public Relations – Some Case Studies

The success of new media as a tool of public relations in India can be easily gauged by the innumerable case studies that prove that new media is today one of the most important ingredients of any successful public relations campaign. A few such case studies have been discussed in brief in the introductory chapter. Here are a few more such case studies which establish the tremendous utility of the internet based new media tools as tools of public relations:

- **Microsoft’s ‘Office 365’ launch:** When Microsoft launched the ‘Office 365’ package in India in 2013, which allowed the use of MS Office on Windows phones and also provided cloud storage, it launched two parallel campaigns on Twitter and Facebook. While the Twitter campaign with the hashtag #sorryboss asked the followers to come up with excuses for not reporting to work, the ‘Completely boss’ campaign on Facebook listed out the benefits of ‘Office 365’ and showed how helpful it was for official work. The Twitter handle replied to the tweets with the ‘did you know’ posts and listed how all the excuses could be overcome by using the new product.

“Microsoft India had launched an extensive social media campaign for promoting ‘Office 365’ that promises to be your complete office in the cloud, through a story-telling approach. From #sorryboss on Twitter asking users to tweet their lamest work excuses to ‘Completely Boss’ on Facebook that explained the benefits of Office 365 and the blogger meet with a contest where bloggers could weave a story around how the new product could help transform their business, Office 365 had it all covered.” (“21 best social media campaigns,” 2013)

The three day campaign was so successful that within a short span of time, #sorryboss was one of the top trends on Twitter and the number of followers of Microsoft had doubled. The campaign was interesting from many perspectives. It directly interacted with the average office goer who was technology savvy and looked forward to the introduction of such new products. At the same time, the campaign also hit an emotional chord with the user by asking about the excuses that one makes while at work, as most professionals have made such excuses at some stages of their careers.

- **HDFC Life Insurance’s campaign on Twitter and Youtube:** Insurance major HDFC Life Insurance, in April, 2015 tried to reach out to the young professionals by airing stand-up comedy through their official Youtube channel. Reputed stand-up comedians Azeem Banatwalla, Karunesh Talwar and Kunal Kamra, were roped in to present an act called ‘bad investments’ which tried to generate humour by focussing on unwise or unprofitable investments.

The Twitter hashtag #StandUpOnTwitter trended through the day and tried to engage the followers by having games which asked the visitors to put insurance related terms into names of feature films. For example, 'Hum Dil Deke Chuke Sanam' became 'Hum Premium De Chuke Sanam' or 'Yeh Jawani Hain Diwani' was followed by 'Kaise Chalega Kharcha Pani'. This campaign was an instant hit with the users since any reference to Bollywood immediately touches a chord with Indians.

Then the half an hour comedy session was streamed live on the official YouTube channel of HDFC Life Insurance. The session was a laugh riot and attracted a lot of hits. Such campaigns go a long way in connecting with the target audience which otherwise may be wary of interacting with insurance agents. However, such initiatives give the companies a more intimate image and help them in reaching out to the target customers more easily.

“Weird/witty/quirky questions kept pouring in on Twitter with the campaign hashtag. The funny trio got on to the job of creating hilarious responses to them through short videos. Within a short span of time, these funny response videos were shared with the users by also tagging them. It’s been quite a laugh riot watching through these videos.

HDFC Life, one of India’s leading private life insurance companies, chose to reach out to the new generation millennials via stand up comedy on Twitter. It teamed up with three stand-up comedians who made jokes on ‘Bad investments’ and while at it generated a massive social media buzz for the comedy act, using a variety of creative, engaging contests on social media. Even while the act was live streamed, the brand continued to engage its fans to keep up the momentum.” (“21 best social media campaigns,” 2013)

- **New Media campaign for the movie ‘Lootera’:** In the year 2013, the movie ‘Lootera’ took the assistance of new media in a major way for promotions and publicity. The film, directed by Vikramaditya Motwane and starring Ranvir Singh and Sonakshi Sinha was not a typical Bollywood potboiler expected to rake in a lot of revenues. Therefore, this innovative campaign was planned and executed.

A 'Lootera Radio' app was promoted through the social media pages of the film through which the songs were beamed. Since the music of the film was one of its strong point, the radio concept was an instant hit. It also established the credentials of the film as a period film as the radio was the most popular mode of entertainment in the yesteryears.

In addition, the 'Lootera Talkies' app facilitated the booking of tickets through the Facebook page itself, which was a very innovative step and had not been done for any prominent Hindi movie before. Further, in a bid to portray the beautiful visuals of the film to social media and attract more visitors, an app called "Vintage Camera" was created, which asked the fans to upload images of similar beautiful locations. The app gave an "Instagram" like feel which further attracted the social media users to this experiment.

Apart from the initiatives mentioned above, they took all the measures that are nowadays adopted by most film production companies. A digital poster of the film was released and trailers were uploaded on YouTube. Facebook and Twitter accounts were opened. The Facebook page became quite popular with over two lakh 'likes'. The social media pages of the lead actors Ranveer Singh and Sonakshi Sinha as well as the director Vikramaditya Motwane were also leveraged create buzz about the film.

"The challenge for the Lootera social media campaign was to build the right image for this film by blending in its period look with slick digital moves. The campaign also worked towards capitalizing on the huge following that its stars Ranveer and Sonakshi enjoyed on various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Balancing the soft, sweet aspects of romance without being cheesy and over the top with Vikramaditya Motwane's intelligent image on Twitter was a big part of the campaign and its execution.

In times when movies are fast paced and sport the contemporary look gaining acceptance for a film like Lootera with its period look was a challenge that the campaign has overcome very successfully. Well thought out conversations, well designed apps and hard work have all worked to create a big impact.

Using various dedicated apps from time to time kept people interested and built the required buzz at the relevant stage. The design and the interface of the apps was quite good.” (Campaign Looter Review,” 2013)

To conclude this chapter, it may be mentioned that new media has today attained the dimension of a full-fledged industry capable of providing independent digital solutions to the clients. The domain of public relations in India is making full use of this new innovation and incorporating innumerable new media tools in its communication strategies. With the advent of new media, all organizations today have become the gatekeepers of the information themselves and the traditional media tools such as newspapers, electronic media etc are taking cues from them.

In this chapter, the change in the role of the public relations agencies and professionals in the light of the development and popularity of new media, the extent of growth of the digital media industry and the mushrooming of companies providing new media solutions in India have been highlighted to drive home the point that the private sector organizations of India have rapidly adopted new media in their public relations functioning.

However, it may be added that new media innovations can prove to be counter-productive if adequate measures are not taken to control and counter online criticism. Social media messages are instant and spread very fast. Therefore, negative buzz can get created about a product or service as early almost immediately after its launch. Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap’s 2015 film, Bombay Velvet is regarded as an excellent case study in this regard where the film despite being applauded by a section of the critics and even movie goers as good was destroyed by negative feedback in social media. As the new media domain in India gradually matures, many such instances may also further come to light. Therefore, the digital media agencies today focus a lot on content monitoring and reputation management while handling social media pages.

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