

Chapter 6

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Findings

This study has endeavoured to analyse the role and potential of the new media as a tool of public relations in the Indian public sector on the basis of the case study of the new media tools employed by two Delhi based government organisations – the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi. For the purpose, a detailed content analysis of the newspaper reports related to these two organisations has been done. In addition, the social media analysis of the social media accounts of these two organisations has also been done.

These apart, a survey of the target audiences of the organisations under study has been done to analyse whether the messages and information conveyed through the new media tools by these organisations are satisfactorily reaching the target audiences. In general, the emerging trends, vis a vis, the use of new media in the Indian public relations industry, the change in public relations strategies, the demand for new skill sets in the industry have also been analysed in deep details. On the basis of the above, the following are the major findings of this study:

- **Success of new media as a public relations tool:** From the study, it has emerged that the employment of new media has helped these organisations garner a lot of positive coverage in the traditional media, which clearly signifies their tremendous success. The content analysis of three leading English newspapers – The Times of India, Hindustan Times and The Indian Express was done to gauge the same and it was found that after the employment of the new media options, the negative coverage by the traditional media decreased to a certain extent. More importantly, the news of the introduction of these tools also led to good coverage in the media.

The content analysis studied the coverage of Delhi Traffic Police in these three papers three months before and three months after the introduction of the new media tools such as SMS service, social media pages etc in October,

2010. The analysis on the University of Delhi has considered news clippings three months prior to and three months after the introduction of the online forms system in June, 2012.

In addition, the Delhi Traffic Police launched two new facilities – the mobile app and the internet based messaging service - Whatsapp in 2014, because of which the coverage of 2014 has also been taken into consideration. Similarly, the University of Delhi introduced the online admission process in 2015. Therefore, news coverage of this initiative has also been covered.

For a deeper understanding of the nature of media coverage prior to the introduction of these tools, the researcher has also studied some random newspaper coverages of the years 2008 and 2009. In total, 71 news items about the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi were found.

During the analysis of these news items, it could be observed that the amount of negative coverage of these organisations as a whole was much higher. For example, a report on the Hindustan Times, dated 31st May, 2010, said, "Time to accept forms online". In this story, the reporter narrated the inconveniences faced by an outstation admission aspirant in the absence of the online procedure. On the other hand, after the introduction of the online downloading of forms in 2012, the same paper carried a detailed report with the headline, "Jump the queue, fill out application forms online this yr".

The introduction of these new tools also gave the organisations a lot of positive publicity and goodwill. The introduction of the Facebook and Twitter pages, WhatsApp service gave the Delhi Traffic Police a lot of good press with all the three newspapers studied here carrying the stories in details.

On the introduction of the new WhatsApp service, the Times of India wrote, "The Traffic Police had recently asked Delhiites to come forward and complain about illegal parking in the city through their Facebook page and traffic helpline numbers 1095 in order to curb the menace of 'parking mafia'. The launching of a WhatsApp helpline is seen as a step forward in this direction.

Delhi Police has been making concentrated efforts of late to utilize the potential of WhatsApp, the popular messaging app to reach out to the citizens and also for effective communication among themselves.”

The introduction of the Facebook page by the University of Delhi also garnered the university a lot of positive media coverage. In its report, the Indian Express wrote, “With its helplines and open-days flooded with pre-admission queries, Delhi University on Monday launched its Facebook page for students, giving them another avenue to sort out their questions, raise their grievances and offer suggestions.

At the first Open Day at the South campus, officials of the University were bombarded by a series of questions by curious students and concerned parents as they sought to clear their doubts about the new admission norms and other details and nuances of several courses.

Vice Chancellor Dinesh Singh said at the institution’s social networking profile, a link to which is available on the University’s website, he will himself try to answer several of the queries posted by students.”

The above mentioned examples certainly signify that the new media tools have been very helpful in getting these organisations positive media coverage which is one of the primary parameters of the success of a public relations initiative.

However, along with the wide coverage in the traditional media, these new media tools have also helped these organisations directly reach the people, interact with them and get their feedback. They have now become the gatekeeper of the information they intend to share and also control its flow. The information shared is instant along with its feedback. The dependence on traditional media has significantly diminished because of the the presence of these organisations on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The Delhi Traffic Police has over three lakh followers on its Twitter handle while its Facebook page has over two lakh likes. The University of Delhi has over seven lakh likes on its Facebook page. The websites of these organisations also get a lot of traffic as thousands log in everyday to look for information. The WhatsApp service and mobile application of the Delhi Traffic Police also register a substantial number of subscriptions every day. Therefore, these new media alternatives have certainly emerged as potent tools of public relations for these organisations.

Keeping in view the trends one can observe in the private sector and the successful use of new media by the Prime Minister, it would be safe to say that new media will become the primary source of communication for the public relations professionals in the government sector as well in the days to come. This would certainly help them to communicate better with their target audiences.

- **More accessibility for the people:** The employment of the new media tools by the government organisations under study has made them more accessible to the people. Because of these tools, these organizations have reached their target audience in a better way and the people also have been able to gather the necessary information about these organizations through their websites, social media pages, mobile applications etc.

To gauge the reach of the new media tools employed by these organizations, two separate surveys were conducted among the target audience of both the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi. In both the surveys, a sample size of hundred respondents was considered. While in case of the Delhi Traffic Police, vehicle owners and drivers were considered for the survey, for the University of Delhi, students, aspiring students, their parents, family members were considered since all of them were directly concerned about the activities of the university.

In the survey it could be found that both in cases of the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi, the awareness levels among the respondents about the introduction of these new tools was pretty high (65 percent for the Delhi Traffic Police and 80 percent for the University of Delhi).

While an encouraging 61.53 percent respondents said they had visited the Delhi Traffic Police website, a substantial 57 percent said they found the website helpful. Since the University of Delhi website is accessed by a lot of youngsters, here the percentage of respondents who said they had visited the website was very high at 97 percent. A healthy 80 percent of the respondents also found the website helpful, which is an indicator that the site has been able to fulfill its largely fulfill its potential of communicating information to the people.

Regarding the usage of social media, about 30 percent of the respondents said that they had visited the Facebook and Twitter pages of the Delhi Traffic Police. While the number was a bit on the lower side, it can be assumed that this percentage is steadily increasing given the fact that the Facebook and Twitter pages of the traffic police force of the national capital already has over five lakh users. In case of the University of Delhi, the percentage of respondents who said they had visited the social media pages was over 62 percent and 57 percent opined that they found the pages helpful.

One issue on which the respondents were more or less unanimous was that the introduction of these new media tools had enhanced the image and reputation of the organizations under study. In case of the Delhi Traffic Police, 80.76 percent of the users agreed that these tools had enhanced the traffic police force's reputation, while in case of the University of Delhi; the percentage was slightly lesser at 63.8 percent. This may be considered to be an important indicator of the success of these tools as public relations tools as well because one of the core objectives of the public relations team of any organization is to take measures to enhance its image and reputation.

The analysis of the social media pages of these organizations also revealed that the introduction of these pages have taken the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi much closer to the people. The Facebook and Twitter pages of the Delhi Traffic Police give about ten updates a day regarding the city's traffic scenario. Combining both these accounts, the Delhi Traffic Police has over five lakh followers on social media. The updates reaches them directly. The mobile application also provides about five to six updates a day

which reaches the subscribers directly on their smart phones. The Facebook page of the University of Delhi is, however, not as fast, though they do update their account from time to time and provide link for very important updates such as the admission notices and so on.

The updates provided through these social media platforms are directly reaching the target audience and providing them with the necessary information. The Delhi Traffic Police tries to react to all complaints from the people on their Facebook page within five minutes though they use Twitter only for sending the traffic related updates. According to a media report, within a year of the opening of the Facebook page, more than 22,000 traffic violations were reported through Facebook page in the city. The WhatsApp service is also gaining popularity and a lot of people are posting complaints on the WhatsApp number.

- **Immense potential of new media in government sector public relations activities:** The study of the new media tools employed by the public relations teams of the organisations under study reveals that new media has tremendous potential in communicating relevant information to the target audience in an effective and instant manner. In fact, the public also expects the government to reach them through more such avenues.

For example, the instant traffic updates provided by the Facebook, Twitter and mobile app facilities of the Delhi Traffic Police has helped the department create a positive image among the people. The media is also now more positive about its coverage of the traffic police because now it cannot allege that motorists didn't have any prior information about snarls in an area and that contributed to the further escalation of the problem.

In case of the University of Delhi also, now a lot of students aspiring to join the university expect it to update information about the activities of the university not only on the website but also on the social media channels. This being an institution of international repute, also attracts students from many other countries across the world. Therefore, active presence on the internet based platforms is extremely important for the university.

The utilization of these new media tools also give the public sector organisations a better platform for competing with their private counterparts. In many cases, it is observed that the public sector establishments which are in direct competition with the private sector fail to match up with them in terms of aggressive advertising and public relations activities due to constraints such as expenditure and the necessary manpower. In such circumstances, active presence on the social media can help a lot in establishing a brand since social media activities are generally low cost and do not involve huge costs generally incurred in launching expensive advertising campaigns and entertaining the mainstream media through lavish product launches and press conferences.

The government should look at exploiting these new media options even more in their communication strategies because these platforms provide immediate feedback to the message or information that has been transmitted. By utilising new media, the government can gauge what are the expectations of the people and how actually they are performing on the ground.

The Prime Minister's office runs such a website called, www.mygov.in, which gives the citizens an opportunity to air their views. There are other options such as the Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts of his office which are also extremely popular. However, all suggestions, grievances, feedback can't be sent directly to the Prime Minister's office. The other departments should also follow suit so that the public is benefitted.

New media can also be a very affective crisis communication tool. In case of any crisis such as a natural disaster or any major controversy facing the government, new media can used to immediately communicate with the people and convey relevant information. In case of disasters or law and order problems, details can be shared about the relief facilities, health facilities etc and in case of any controversy related to corruption or any other issue, new media can be used to directly communicate with the people.

However, along with the opening of these channels, the government has to ensure that the feedback or complaints put up on these platforms are adequately addressed so that the people develop faith in accessing them. At the heart of the success of these tools lies the requirement to develop an

efficient work culture, which unfortunately is missing today in many government run establishments.

Another important aspect is of course the increase in the penetration of the internet to the rural and semi urban areas along with internet literacy among the majority of the population. The penetration of internet and the awareness about using it is increasing at a very fast pace and the government is also pumping in a lot of funds to ensure that but the momentum has to be continued. Only then the new media tools will be able to bear the best possible results.

- **Need for greater monitoring and professionalism in maintaining and running the new media tools, lack of initiative in their introduction and implementation:** The analysis of the social media accounts of the two organisations under study revealed that some of those accounts are not professionally maintained resulting in lack of timely information and updates on these pages for the visitors.

For example, the Facebook page of the University of Delhi has over seven lakh 'likes' which is a significantly huge number and displays the expectations, people have regarding getting timely information about the university from the page. However, the page does not provide updates regarding important developments such as release of cut off lists, eligible student lists etc. On the other hand, it updates about the seminars, conferences taking place in the campus which are obviously of lesser importance in comparison to the admission process which attracts lakhs of aspirants every year from all over the country.

The University of Delhi also has a YouTube channel through which it can stream lectures, upload videos of important seminars, conferences and other academic discussions. The channel's link is also provided on the home page of the official website of the university. But the channel is completely inactive and has uploaded only a handful of videos. The number of subscribers is also abysmally low at little over 300, which is miniscule in comparison to the student strength of the university. In comparison, most of the reputed international universities have very active YouTube channels which the

students access regularly for their academic requirements. Given the fact that the university has shared the link on the homepage of their official website, they should keep the channel active since a lot of people must be visiting the page every day.

In comparison, the Delhi Traffic Police is far more attentive in updating their social media channels and updating the complainants about their queries. In fact, shifts of two policemen monitor and address complaints on a round the clock basis. They are monitored by an inspector ranked officer. Despite their relative success, queries can be noticed every day on the Facebook page which have not been answered. It is true that some of them do not pertain to the traffic police and are about other departments such as the municipal bodies. But in such cases also, they must respond to the complainant and tell him where he should lodge the complaint.

Though the content analysis of the newspaper reports covered in three leading English newspapers - The Times of India, Hindustan Times and The Indian Express did not reveal any specific instance when the issue of non-maintenance of the website or the social media channels has led to any adverse media coverage, but such non-maintenance of the social media channels often leads to a lot of negative media feedback. More importantly, un-updated official social media accounts of important organisations like the ones under study leads to a tremendous loss credibility which is very unhealthy for the reputation of the organisations.

In general, it could be found that the government run establishments were comparatively more reluctant in adapting these tools. The main reason behind the non-introduction of these tools seemed to be lack of initiative and enthusiasm and absence of the work culture of accountability. Since new media neither needs major expenditure nor requires manpower or infrastructural overhaul, the non-introduction of new media tools certainly is a result of the lack of initiative from the government sector barring a few exceptions as elaborated in the study.

- **Change in skillsets for the public relations professionals:** Due to the proliferation of the internet based platforms, also known as new media, the

public relations industry also has been tremendously influenced. The study of the Delhi Traffic Police, the University of Delhi as well as the public relations industry as a whole revealed that the necessary skill sets of a public relations professional has also undergone a tremendous change.

The Information Technology cell of the Delhi Traffic Police is assisted by a digital media expert who has helped them design the social media pages and has also trained the officials who are on duty to address the queries of the people through these channels. Similarly, the corporate communications wings of the private companies, the independent public relations firms also hire digital media experts who know exactly how to promote a product or service through social media. They also know how to take the product or service to more people through more 'likes', 'shares', 'followers', 'tweets' and 'retweets'.

Since the demand for such professionals is increasing by the day, courses on digital media, digital marketing have also become very popular. Any candidate with such qualifications along with the routine degrees in Mass Communication or Advertising and Public Relations is always preferred. Around the country, there are various institutes offering such courses. Some of such institutes are the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) in Ahmedabad and Lucknow. The computer training provider NIIT also offers such courses. Most of these courses are short term in nature ranging from a week to a year, but given the pace at which development is taking place in this sector and new technologies and innovations are being introduced, the days are not far when specialized full time degree courses will be designed to produce professionals who can handle the digital media related activities for the organisations.

Gone are the days when, anyone with a flair for writing and good communication skills could become a public relations professional. While these are virtues that will always help any aspiring public relations professional to succeed in the field, but thorough knowledge about new media is gradually becoming a must to progress well as a professional. The public relations profession is expected to become more web based in the days to come and such qualifications will become must. The same also applies for the

public relations professionals working in the government sector. They also have to wake up to this reality in the near future.

6.2 Conclusion

In the last two decades, the Information Technology sector world over has undergone a massive change. The computerization of all sectors happened and today we live in a world where no work can take place without the help of computers. The internet is an equally important invention which has woven a web around the world connecting all our lives.

Internet today is the basic platform on which all activities related to communication are done. Gone are days when reams of paper would be used for sending communications by post or compiling official documents. Now most of the documents or communications are made available online and offline communication is done only if necessary. Most of the sectors including government functioning are gradually transitioning to this development.

The influence of the internet can be observed in the field of media as well. While print publications continue to be popular in most parts of the world, their readership has considerably decreased in many countries. In the United States, for example, the print newspaper industry has considerably shrunk. “Print advertising fell for a sixth consecutive year in 2012, and not by just a little – it dropped \$1.8 billion, or 8.5%, in a slowly improving economy.² National advertising is a particular weakness, suggesting that corporations are shifting their advertising dollars to other platforms.” (“Newspapers stabilizing but still threatened,” 2013)

However, the same trend can be observed in a lot of other countries where, the readers are increasingly preferring digital platforms such as news portals for getting informed about news through their mobile phones, tablets or computers. The print media market in India today is still thriving with the major media companies publishing newspapers such as The Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Hindu, Dainik Jagran (Hindi), Ananda Bazar Patrika (Bengali), Malayala Manorama (Malayalam) raking in considerable revenues.

But the alternative streams of media dissemination like online media have also grown manifolds and all the prominent media houses, both print and audio-visual, today have

news websites which compete with other for higher number of viewer hits as well as advertising revenues. Mobile internet is emerging as a specialised field as more and more news websites are designing mobile compliant websites to cater to the increasing number of users who now prefer to read their daily news on their smart-phones. Most of the traditional media houses have full-fledged online media teams to deal with both the news dissemination as well as the business aspects of online media.

The advent of social media has added a whole new dimension to the media business as many newsmakers such as celebrities; major organisations are informing the world about their major decisions and developments through the social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter etc. Film banners are releasing their trailers on YouTube and celebrities are letting the peep into their holidays through photographs on Instagram. Many times, it is observed that the mainstream media is picking news from the social media and publishing on the traditional platforms.

This has resulted in a new trend where, the journalists are being instructed by their editors to update news about the major happenings on their media house's Twitter handle. Even this practice has led to a micro-blogging war where all editors are observing which media house is reaching the audience with the tweet first. Hash-tags are being developed about specific events and efforts are made to trend them on the social media which gives the media houses idea whose news is circulating fast. For example, if a news channel breaks a story, it circulates it on social media with a specific hash-tag. The hash-tag then trends and gives the media house information about the reach of the story.

The public relations industry world over was primarily seen as a sector which facilitated the news coverage of an organisation or event in the print as well as electronic media. The public relations agencies or the in-house departments of the organisations ensured publicity for their client or parent organisation by organising press conferences or distributing press releases. The public relations officials are generally the first point of contact for the journalists who approach them with queries.

For many years, the primary indicator of the success of the public relations machinery of any organisation depended on the amount of positive coverage it could bring to the organisation in the newspapers and television channels. In case of any negative

development, the yardstick was how successful the public relations team had been in hiding the negative development from the press.

However, with the increasing popularity of the social media, now a few more parameters have been added to analyse whether any public relations campaign had been successful. Along with the media coverage, the organisations also want activity on social media. If the Facebook or Twitter account of an organisation gets a lot of ‘likes’ or ‘followers’. If their posts or tweets are shared and re-tweeted a lot, then the campaign would be considered successful.

New media is today an integral part of every public relations campaign. Along with publicity in mainstream media such as newspapers, television channels etc, the organisations or clients also want wide coverage in the online media and popularity in the social media channels. Bloggers are also approached to ensure that they provide coverage in their blogs since these are widely read and their comments, opinions are given a lot of importance by the readers.

Digital media is today a specialised field about which short term courses are being offered by even prestigious government organisations such as the Indian Institutes of Management in Lucknow and Ahmedabad. The public relations professionals are expected to know about the use of digital media, that is, the art of creating content specific for social media, the means to generate buzz about a product on social media such as buying ‘likes’ and ‘followers’, controlling negative publicity by handling negative hash-tags and so on. The skill set of the average public relations professional has undergone a major change.

These trends are only going to intensify further in the days to come and new media will probably become ‘mainstream’ as more and more people will use them. This can already be observed in the developed world where internet has penetrated to almost every section of the population. In India also, internet penetration is one of the priorities of the government. The government of India intends to take the broadband internet facility to more about 2,50,000 villages of the country as part of its ‘Digital India campaign’. If this objective is achieved, many more internet users will be added to the country in the days to come. In such a scenario, no public relations campaign can remain aloof from such developments.

As mentioned above, the public relations strategies of the private sector today depend a lot on new media, as content creation on the internet, activity on social media, designing of mobile applications, getting coverage in blogs are given very high priority. In case of certain sectors such as automobiles, mobile phones, electronics etc, almost all campaigns rely mainly on new media since ecommerce has today emerged as one of the most important revenue sources for them.

However, the same cannot be said about the public relations mechanism of the government departments and public sector undertakings. They largely function in a traditional manner and the focus is more on traditional media than making use of the new media platforms. Aspects like presence on social media, designing of interactive websites, digital helpline facilities, and mobile applications are modern ways to interact not only with the media but with the target audience as a whole.

These platforms have completely changed the age old philosophy of the profession of public relations that publicity or coverage is possible only through the mainstream media. Due to the advent of social media, now any organisation or individual can reach a wide audience without any assistance from the traditional media platforms.

However, this superb opportunity to reach the people has not yet been tapped adequately by the government sector. The Press Information Bureau (PIB), the Directorates of Information and Publicity in the states or the public relations of the public sector undertakings largely depend on the mainstream media for their publicity related requirements. While the Prime Minister of the nation is extremely active on social media, not many government departments have adopted the work culture yet. For specific events or developments, even now mostly press conferences are organised or press statements are released and the success of the press release is gauged by the number of newspapers who have covered that particular piece of news.

In such a scenario, the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi emerged as exceptions to the researcher. While these organisations did have their public relations mechanism to interact with the media, they also employed new media techniques like an effective website, social media channels, and mobile applications and so on. Therefore, an attempt has been made here to evaluate the potential of new media as a tool of public relations in the Indian public sector with the case study of the new media tools employed by these organisations.

In order to carry out the study, a content analysis of three leading newspapers of the national capital – The Times of India, Hindustan Times and The Indian Express was carried out. The news carried by the print as well as online editions of the newspapers prior to the introduction of new media tools by these organisations and the coverage after the introduction of these tools was done. The objective behind this exercise was to gauge whether the introduction of these tools made any difference to the quality of coverage provided to these two organisations. The analysis of the social media pages of these organisations was also done to study how much was the impact of their social media outreach on the target audience.

In addition, a sample survey was conducted among a hundred target audience each of the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi. For the Delhi Traffic Police, the respondents were all vehicle users in Delhi who used the city's roads everyday and faced the traffic related issues. The respondents in the survey for the University of Delhi were a combination of students, aspiring students and their family members etc who were directly impacted by the introduction of the new media tools.

Along with studying the new media activities of these organisations, the researcher has also tried to get an overall picture about the use of new media in the Indian public relations industry and has tried to analyse the potential of new media in establishing more potent links of communication between the arms of the government and the people of the country.

The case study of the new media tools employed by the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi revealed that these tools had been quite effective in building a positive image among the people of the city. With these tools, the two organisations under study had been able to reach out to the people directly and attempt to address their queries and grievances.

It could be found that the Delhi Traffic Police had over five lakh subscribers on its two social media accounts – Facebook (over two lakh 'likes') and Twitter (over three lakh followers). The Delhi Traffic Police team sent out eight to ten posts every day apprising the people about the traffic situation in the city. While the posts are uploaded on Facebook, they are also automatically shared on the Twitter handle and the mobile application. The queries from the citizens are displayed on the 'Visitor's Posts' section where the Delhi Traffic Police attempts to respond to their queries

within five minutes. Twitter and the mobile application are used primarily for one way communication that is, sharing of details about the traffic jams and snarls.

The Facebook page of the Delhi Traffic Police received about 500 complaints a day from the commuters. Till June, 2015, from June, 2010 when this facility was launched, more than 4,000 penalty notices had been sent to erring drivers on the basis of pictures and videos uploaded on the Facebook page by other commuters. The Delhi Traffic Police employs two constables on duty in three separate shifts all through the day to monitor and update the social media pages as well as the mobile application. The updates are monitored by a Traffic Inspector. The new media activities are handled by the Public Interaction Unit (PIU) of the traffic police which has about 80 personnel looking after different departments. A detailed database of the all the social media responses and updates is also being maintained by the department.

The mobile application and the WhatsApp service launched by the Delhi Traffic Police have also have been received very well by the commuters. According to media reports, the WhatsApp service launched by the force in October, 2014 received close to 85,000 complaints till April, 2015, which shows how positively the people have taken this new initiative. The website of the Delhi Traffic Police – www.delhitrafficpolice.nic.in is also very exhaustive and is visited by hundreds of visitors every day. So far, (as on 7th August, 2015) it has received more than 3.92 lakh visitors.

The content analysis of the newspaper reports also revealed that prior to the introduction of these services in 2010; the number of negative news about the traffic snarls was much higher. After the introduction of the new media initiatives, the public is always better informed about the traffic situation in the city as a result of which there is better appreciation of the efforts taken by the Delhi Traffic Police. The media is also more tolerant since the news about snarls and blockades are circulated by the Traffic Police itself even before the media reports about them.

In the survey conducted by the researcher, it could be found that over 65 percent of the respondents were aware about the new media initiatives taken by the Delhi Traffic Police and over 30 percent had visited their Facebook and Twitter pages. From the survey results also it is quite obvious that these initiatives have been received well by

the people. It is certain that the percentage of Delhi's road users subscribing to these social media channels is going to go further up in the days to come.

It may be argued that these new media initiatives should not be called public relations tools, rather they are operational initiatives towards ensuring better performance and accountability. However, it must be added that public relations is all about communicating with the people and conveying the desired message. Before the advent of these tools, the traditional media platforms like print media, television channels, radio etc were used to convey information to the people and the public relations professionals facilitated that process. But after the introduction of these tools, the organisations are now directly reaching their target audience without the assistance of the news media. In most of the establishments, government or private, the new media activities are handled by the public relations, advertising, corporate communications or marketing communications personnel only.

The University of Delhi also has a Facebook page which has more than seven lakh 'likes', which is a significantly substantial number. Their website – www.du.ac.in is also well designed and at par with the websites of the reputed universities worldwide. For the admission season, the University had also started a dedicated website and a mobile application to facilitate the process.

The official Facebook account of the University of Delhi is very popular with the students studying or aspiring to study in the university. With over seven lakh 'likes' it is easily one of the most popular Facebook accounts in the entire country. The number of 'likes' to this account are much higher than the other prominent educational institutions in India. However, in terms of activity, the performance of the account is rather disappointing.

During its analysis, it could be noticed that information about some of the major developments such as the start of the admission season were shared on the page, but the subsequent developments such as the release of the lists of selected candidates were not shared. Taking advantage of such a scenario, a lot of other unofficial websites, blogs are sharing their links, promising students information about the various developments taking place in the university.

The university had also been facing some controversies such as the furore over the four year under graduate programme (FYUP) and the Facebook account could have been a superb platform to reach out to the students and conduct a healthy discussion. But this opportunity was not utilised. Rather, the university management seems over conscious about not facing any criticism on a public platform like this. The disclaimer to the page clearly mentions that the comments would be monitored and any objectionable comment will be deleted by the university authorities. While it is correct that in such a page there should not be any scope for abuses or personal attacks, but healthy criticism about issues important especially to the students must be allowed.

On the home page of the official website of the university, link to a YouTube channel is also provided. However, a visit to the channel shows that there has not been any activity on the channel for a long time and there are only a handful of subscribers to it (little over three hundred). Since, the link is provided on the official website, it is a major public relations failure that the same has not been maintained adequately. In comparison, the YouTube channels maintained by other universities of international repute all over the world have thousands of subscribers and important lectures, recordings of deliberations in conferences and seminars are regularly updated there.

Social media channels, official website are now a days the first point of interaction between an educational institution and its major stakeholders. Any student desiring to study in a university will visit its website or the social media platforms before any other source. Therefore, it is extremely important these platforms are professionally maintained and all the relevant information is shared.

The content analysis of the newspaper coverage generated before and after the introduction of the new media tools by the University of Delhi does reveal that the introduction of these tools have provided positive media coverage to the university. For example, the news of the introduction of the Facebook page was received very positively by the media and all newspapers had carried the news.

The survey conducted by the researcher also revealed that over 80 percent of the respondents were aware of the introduction of these new media tools by the university. A massive 97 percent of the respondents opined that they had visited the university website while a substantial 62 percent said they had also visited the

Facebook page of the University of Delhi. The content analysis as well as the sample survey clearly indicate that the target audience of the university have received the introduction of these new media tools positively

However, the new media platforms, if not maintained and monitored properly, may also invite negative publicity which can be very counter-productive from the perspective of public relations. There have been many examples world over where inadequate social media management has led to massive negative publicity in the media. Now a days, even a good product or service can be ruined if the social media campaign is not properly managed.

For example, in 2015, just after the disastrous earthquakes in Nepal, optical manufacturer Lenskar ran a campaign on Twitter, and announced, “Shake it off like this earthquake; Get any Vincent chase sunglasses upto Rs. 3000 for flat Rs. 500 by sending invites to 50 friends @lenskart.com/refer-sun”. The campaign obviously tried to cash in on the massive tragedy that killed thousands of people, and soon was flooded with a lot of criticism. “In this case, even though Lenskart soon apologised, the brand’s social media image has probably taken a beating for a long time to come.” (“Social media blunders in Indian companies,” 2015)

Therefore, all social media activities should not only be monitored well but experienced professionals must be tasked to post content on them. In case of the University of Delhi, though the researcher couldn’t find any negative coverage pertaining to the maintenance of its social media sites, a negative story may be waiting to happen if the monitoring of the online media is not immediately ensured.

In the days to come, new media is expected to become the main pillar of public relations. The current trends certainly indicate that gradually, the new media component will become more important than traditional media in the public relations campaigns. Currently also, on many occasions the news is broken on social media and then the same is picked up by the mainstream media. A 140 character long ‘tweet’ is sufficient to generate hundreds of words in the print media. New media is certainly going to drive the public relations industry in the days to come. Therefore, there is even more requirement to plan new media strategies properly and execute the campaigns professionally.

In case of the government, there have so far been some sporadic success stories as regards the use of new media in the public relations activities only. As mentioned earlier, the government departments and public sector undertakings can certainly take a leaf out of the strategies adopted by the Prime Minister. Public Relations, as a profession intends to communicate information to the target audience and establish a positive image of the organisation. For the government, public relations would precisely mean more transparent interaction with the people. With the increasing penetration of the internet, this would certainly be possible by the increasing use of new media by the government run establishments.

The concept of e-governance is gradually gaining ground. The government is spending a lot of funds to take the internet to the far flung corners. However, e-governance would be possible only when the public relations professionals reach the people directly through these tools. This will require a paradigm change in their planning and strategising process, as they would have to take their campaigns directly to the people without through the internet based platforms. After all, unless information about the schemes and facilities are informed to the target audience, how will they eventually avail their benefits?

Today, the internet and all the media that depends on it are primarily accessed by the educated classes in the country mainly in the urban areas. However, the internet and all the new media devices are classless in character. They can be accessed and utilised by anyone who has a phone and internet access. As more and more people start using the internet in the days to come, new media would also emerge as a very potent means to reach the farthest corners of the country where print newspapers or television channels may take time to reach. Of course, increased education levels would be an added advantage to take the use of new media to more people.

While this study has primarily tried to analyse the utility of new media as a tool of public relations in the India's public sector, it must be accepted that the new media tools, with their universal appeal, have brought diverse professions like public relations, advertising, and marketing under one roof. In addition, the promotion of a product or service and its delivery to the target audience are now done from the same platform since now, a product or a service can be promoted and then delivered through the same online infrastructure. The flurry of products or services promoted

and sold through the e-commerce websites are an excellent example of this trend. Earlier, a new product or service would first be launched and promoted through press publicity, advertisements etc and then sold to the customers through outlets or service delivery centres on the ground.

These trends are a further testimony to the requirement of the government to adopt new media in their day to day functioning. By the adoption of these tools more aggressively, they would be able to not only promote their policies and schemes well but also deliver them on the ground. Internet based delivery platforms minimize human interface and therefore, the main evils gripping the public sector, such as corruption and red tape can be eliminated to a large extent. The government is working towards this objective and visible results should be seen in a few years.

The greatest public relations tool for any organization is its work culture and result delivery efficiency. If a company or a government run establishment inculcates a professional work culture, it is bound to deliver the right results and that in the process will lead to goodwill among the people and positive publicity in the media.

New media can be that engine of change for the public sector in the country. A lot of corruption and service delivery delays happen in India because the personnel at the helm of affairs do not deliver them to the people with efficiency and the system does not demand explanations from them leading to lack of accountability for non-performance. These issues over time have become endemic to the Indian public sector and has reached a stage where it is extremely difficult to bring about a systemic change. New media would eliminate human interface to a large extent and that would automatically remove the possibilities of procedural delays.

For example, a lot of basic services like application for birth and death certificates, driving licenses, ration cards, registration for availing government schemes related to mass education, health benefits, housing etc have been made available online in many states as well as the centre. This has decreased the role of the middle men such as unauthorized agents, clerks who would otherwise fleece people while delivering these services and cause tremendous harassment to them. Corruption has percolated into every strata of the government hierarchy starting from the political leadership to the junior most officials. All these issues can be resolved to a large extent by the effective implementation of new media tools.

Therefore, in conclusion, it may be said that new media is undoubtedly the future of the profession of public relations. The public relations professionals working for the government are yet to adopt these tools entirely in their functioning, but wherever they have done so, the results have been positive and beneficial. The case studies of the new media tools employed by the Delhi Traffic Police as well as the University of Delhi also indicate towards the same.

However, while implementing these new tools, the government run establishments must monitor the content professionally as lack of proper implementation can also lead to large scale negative publicity. The content must always be contemporary and reflect the latest developments taking place in that organization. Stale content can lead to large scale confusion among the people and badly hamper the image and credibility. A few of the case studies cited in this story have indicated towards this possibility.

At the same time, it has to be mentioned that for new media to succeed, few aspects have to adequately taken care of. Firstly, the people in charge of new media implementation must be of the highest integrity and must execute their work with all sincerity and seriousness. Otherwise, like many contemporary government websites, we would get content which would be un-updated and old. Secondly, the government efforts to increase literacy levels and take internet to every corner of the country must bear the expected results, because without higher literacy and internet access, new media would not be able to reach every section of the population.

6.3 Limitations of the Study: New media is a fast changing and vastly dynamic sphere. Every day new innovations are influencing the way it is practiced and received by the people. When the researcher registered this topic for study, the number of social media users were much less in India. The two organisations under study – the Delhi Traffic Police and the University of Delhi were selected because they were the pioneers in introducing these tools. Subsequently, some more organisations within the ambit of the government have also taken up such projects though the numbers are still small. However, they could not be included in the study. In the future, as more organization adopt such tools, probably case studies of more organisations using new media can be done.

6.4 Future Research: In the days to come, there can be many more research possibilities related to my topic of research. Since new media is gradually being implemented, there can be studies about their reach and effectiveness as a communication tool in the rural areas. The proper maintenance and updation of new media tools is also a requirement for its success. Therefore, studies can be conducted about their maintenance by the government run establishments. Since the use of new media is increasing very fast with the increased penetration of internet, many more avenues of research are expected to emerge in the years ahead.

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