A STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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Abstract— **Rural infrastructure is crucial for agriculture, agro-based industries and overall economic development of rural areas. Recent studies indicate an exponential increase in Smartphone usage and mobile internet activity in rural regions of India. The Government of India (GOI) has taken initiatives to raise public awareness about its development schemes through social media. It has been observed that despite these advancements in communications, the Government of India's initiatives has not been fully effective in enhancing awareness of rural citizens about its schemes meant for rural citizens. The aim is to develop a better understanding of rural citizens' behavioral aspects in consumption of social media messages, their reactions towards rural infrastructure development schemes and willingness to participate in the same. Initial observations indicate that even if rural people were to use smartphones, require a great amount of knowledge sharing, meaningful engagement, and participation would be required to enhance awareness about the schemes for rural development. This research not only explores the under-utilization of technology in the underserved sectors but also highlights the current shortcomings of the Governmental initiatives. Replicability of this research in other rural development schema is possible, for the betterment of rural India.**

Keywords— ***Government of India, rural infrastructure development, social media, knowledge sharing, Social Network Services, rural development, Technology***

I.   INTRODUCTION

"The true India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its seven hundred thousand villages. If the villages perish, India will perish too."- M.K. Gandhi

The Indian society is a complex society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multilingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people. Since the inception of independent India, none can deny the fact that India has developed a lot in almost all the fields leading from infrastructure to public health care, from communication sector to IT field and much more.

The aim of this paper is to focus on the Social Media Usage in Rural Development Schemes of Government of India. This paper will also define how rural infrastructure development schemes of GOI can penetrate through Social Network Services (SNS) and various platforms. It also critically examines the relationship between the social media networks and rural India development.

Development is not a linear process but a multidimensional exercise. There have been many initiatives by the Indian government and many UN programs which have been implemented in Indian villages. The government of India is also taking initiatives to spread awareness about current schemes through various social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, WWW, etc.

Every media whether it is a radio, a news channel, an NGO or any other source which interacts with public at some level, has a social responsibility. This responsibility is very important in nature as it affects the development of the society by large means. The media cannot shirk from this social responsibility and thus, making all the prominent media networks as the "social media networks".

The objectives of this paper are:

1) To study the influence of social media on the awareness and reach of governmental communications in current rural infrastructure development schemes in India.
2) To propose a framework for the assessment of current social media in relevant rural infrastructure development schemes in India.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The Indian government has started many initiatives which have tried to encompass the large Indian crowd and enhance their living standards and welfare. Besides that, many private

social networks like various NGOs, news channels, various websites etc. have also taken the initiative.

Diverse social and infrastructural needs must be addressed more or less simultaneously to ensure a nation's future growth and prosperity. Social media has affected all spheres of rural people's lives: right from their livelihood to their healthcare, from traditions to social campaigns etc. Time and time again SNS have found a way and have realized their potential to become pioneers in rural development.

But there has been a critical problem, the problem has been of the digital divide. The global digital divide describes the unequal distribution of information and communication technology across nations, commonly described as the "gap between the information haves and have-nots." The contours of the global digital divide are complex and, although the "digital divide" has become a common political catchphrase, the popular discourse has, for the most part, failed to capture all of the dimensions of the divide. (Ali, 2011).

The problem then lies with the fact that rural India needs platforms where they could express their grievances, like, online public grievance. Social media can provide this platform where their voices and their culture is protected, looked after. In today's global economy, where computers and the Internet are so fundamental to production and participation, it is clear that if the right to development is to be taken seriously, that right must encompass the development of information, connectivity, technology, infrastructure, and skills.

It is also very important to look at the various platforms which have helped rural India, where there was a definite impact made on the lives of people, with many on-going Government schemes for Rural development and the increase in reach of social media.

Various Government Schemes for Rural developments are:

1. PMGSY

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was initiated by Government of India to ensure better connectivity to unconnected parts of the country. The primary strategy underlying PMGSY was poverty reduction through sustainable development and management of rural roads network. The government of India is endeavoring to set high and uniform technical and management standards and facilitating policy development and planning at the State level.

According to latest figures made available by the State Governments under a survey to identify Core Network as part of the PMGSY program, about 1.67 lakh Unconnected Habitations are eligible for coverage under the program. This involves construction of about 3.71 lakh km. of roads for New Connectivity and 3.68 lakh km. under upgradation.

According to Ram Pravesh Singh of Berwa village, a major benefit from the PMGSY roads, extending from Katara all the way to villages adjoining NH-57, is the improved access they have provided to schools and colleges. Many young students have bought motor bikes to go to colleges, while girls are riding bicycles to high schools. There's no better feeling than getting linked.

2. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a national campaign by the GOI, covering 4041 statutory cities and towns, to clean the streets, roads and infrastructure of the country.

The campaign was officially launched on 2 October 2014 at Rajghat, New Delhi, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is India's biggest ever cleanliness drive and 3 million government employees and school and college students of India participated in this event.

Churu district in Rajasthan: One of the most backward States in India in terms of open defecation, Rajasthan has led the way for others because Churu district is likely to become the first district in the State to get the defecation free status very soon. Most of the blocks in the district has already achieved or near its achievement of the 100% target of providing toilets in each household.

In earlier days, Government used Radio, television for promoting various schemes but with the drastic increase in social media, we are getting better platforms for promoting and creating awareness of various Government schemes. Social media applications such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, other applications are very helpful in creating awareness of GOI schemes to rural areas.

There are schemes which are very well promoted through social media and creating a great impact over the lives of people like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, but some important schemes lack in proper usage of social media. For Examples of how PMGSY has impacted the lives of the people, but from our observation we have seen that the role of social media is very less. PMGSY had created various Facebook pages, Twitter pages but they have not been updated since years. The last update on this page was on 11th October 2011, which was shared again on 26th June 2014. This shows that the government has not been using these platforms effectively to reach the common people.

Many other initiatives have been undertaken by the Indian Government, a popular example is the Meri Sadak application. A free application available on Google Play Store, Meri Sadak app helps the people in rural areas to notify in case they find any road which is not in a proper condition. However, the number of downloads of this app is very less and the reviews received are not that positive.

After closely examining the various case studies, we have tried to critically examine the social media networks' performance in rural India field wise. The study was based on various case studies and success stories so as to reaffirm our objectives.

III.   METHODOLOGY

We have focused on various case studies where social media has impacted the lives of the rural people. Data was collected through questionnaire, journals, research papers and also through discussion with the people in rural areas like Marunji in Hinjewadi, Pune. The sampling was based on the socio-economic classes as defined by the Government of India, widely known as Stratified Sampling. The strata that we had chosen varied from Rural Lower Class to Rural Upper Class. The education level and the consumer durables owned by the family were the two factors according to which we categorized our strata.

IV.   DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

After the collection of data through questionnaire and survey, we conducted a Qualitative Analysis to understand the usage of social media in rural areas, how effectively the Government of India has penetrated into these sections through social media and if they have been successful enough with their methods.

The various factors that we considered while collecting the data are briefly explained below:

1. Accessibility of technology like Smartphones and Internet connectivity – To find out the reach of technology in the rural areas and how many people are actually utilizing it

2. Usage of Social Media among the rural population – To find out how many people amongst the smartphone users are using social media through their mobile internet

3. How successful the Government has been in its endeavor to promote its schemes in rural areas through social media – To analyze whether the methods opted by the government of India to promote their schemes through social media have been effective enough to penetrate into the rural society.

4. The suggestions were given by the rural people for the government to increase its reach in rural areas. – A qualitative analysis of the suggestions provided by the people in the rural areas to improve the awareness of Government schemes in a way that would be widely acceptable to them.

From the data collected, we observed that there were varied answers from each individual. The responses implied that the data collected covered all the categories of sampling that we had chosen for our strata. From our observations, we have segregated the analysis according to the survey questions and mapped them qualitatively. We have tried to cumulate the responses for each of the questions, analyze them and find an optimal final qualitative response for the same. The findings and inferences from the data collection and qualitative analysis have been explained in the next section.

V.   FINDINGS

From our survey, we found that people were somewhat aware of the various government schemes, but the medium was mostly TV, radios and newspapers. Though most of the people were using smartphones and various applications like Facebook and Whatsapp, the awareness of government schemes through online media was very less. Also, according to the survey, people were willing to accept social media as a platform for awareness of government schemes. Rural development has been the top priority of Government of India; however, due to lack of proper planning and inefficient delivery system, the rural people are not able to get the benefits of the schemes launched by the Indian government.

The contribution of radio, television, and newspapers for government schemes: -AIR has been a part of rural development since independence. AIR have 419 stations across the country and have played a vital role in making the people aware of the various government schemes. Schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao which was launched by the
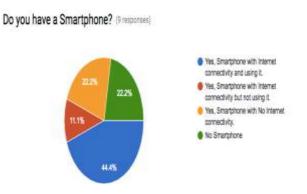
Prime Minister on 24/01/2015, have been given special attention by AIR for the popularization of the schemes.
Television channels like MTV which is mostly a youth-oriented channel, have been used to promote Pradhan Matri Gram Sadak Yojana. Also, radio as a platform has been used to promote this scheme.

Facebook:- Although many Indian villages are deprived of internet connectivity and electricity, still there are some success stories where social media like Facebook have played important role in changing the lives of the people. Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan has been a huge success where people from various sectors including rural have participated actively by keeping their surroundings clean.
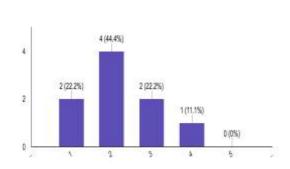
From the survey responses and graphs, we observe various behavioral patterns in the usage of social media in rural areas.

1. We tried to find out the number of people effectively using smartphones and social media. From this below graph, we noticed that 44.4% of the sample size that we had selected had smartphones and were using the internet and social media.
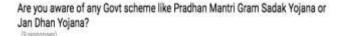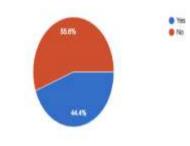
Do you think social media could be used to promote the Govt schemes to help the people?
(9 responses)

3. We also tried to see if people had any kind of awareness regarding the various schemes initiated by the Government. We observe that more than 50% of the sample size had no knowledge about any Government schemes at all.

Do you have a Smartphone? (9 responses)

- Yes, Smartphone with Internet connectivity and using it.
- Yes, Smartphone with Internet connectivity but not using it.
- Yes, Smartphone with No Internet connectivity.
- No Smartphone

Are you aware of any Govt scheme like Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana or Jan Dhan Yojana?
(9 responses)

- Yes
- No

VI. CONCLUSION

2. In this graph, we have tried to scale the opinion of the rural people whether or not they thought that social media could be used for the promotion of the Government schemes. The scale lies between 1 and 5, 1 indicating strong agreement and 5 indicating Strong disagreement. Thus, we observe that maximum people (44.4%) agreed to the proposal that social media could be utilized to create awareness.

There is a need to start more planned and organized attempts toward incorporating rural development departments across the rural areas to meet the ultimate target of rural development in the country. The planners of the nation ought to go for planning these efforts of different organizations and to have a complete systems administration between and within different categories of organizations to share the information and experience. This won't just result in speedier improvement, additionally will incorporate the overall development. It is likewise envious that such an approach be made, not through an assortment of departmental authorities, but rather through an agent who is common to the principal departments which are engaged in rural developmental programs i.e. an NGO working in the area or a village level worker.

Participative rather than Representative: Despite the fact that the Panchayati Raj Institutions at the grass roots level are the principle vehicles through which the rural development projects are conveyed to the rural masses yet frequently it has been seen that the development functionaries achieve just the selected and elected ones. The advantages don't permeate at the low levels. This has made these institutions representative as opposed to participative eventually resisting the very rationale for which they were meant.

Provision of adequate resources: Sufficient resources as far as funds, labor and infrastructure ought to be made accessible to the general population and the organizations to work viably.

Awareness: Despite the fact that there is no shortage of rural developmental projects, yet we are a long way behind in key formative pointers like education, health, sanitation and so on. This is on account that mass doesn't know about the diverse projects launched for their benefits. Hence there is an urgent need to make people aware of rural development schemes through online media sources. Technology can play an important role in creating this awareness. Any rural development strategy should focus on harnessing the innate capabilities of the poor so as to manifest the perfection in them and complement them with capacities such as information, knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can participate and contribute effectively to the growing economy of the country. This is additionally vital in the event that we are to make the democracy really representative and inclusive one.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

Apart from all the responses and analyses, there are certain limitations for our research. First, 70% of India's population lives in rural areas, with no access to modern Internet infrastructures. Thus, social media cannot penetrate to most of the rural areas limiting the people to access the same. Second, the sample size for the analysis was not wide. We visited a few villages from which only limited number of people were interested in communicating with us. Third, most families lack the motivated interest for using technology or social media. Most of the families, who are technologically deprived with very less overall income, are reluctant in using smartphones, let alone use social media. Fourth, many people were indifferent in their behavior towards our survey which led us to collect a few improper responses. Finally, the overall ignorance towards any kind of advancement of the Rural Lower class, which comprises a large percentage of the entire rural society.

The important thing would be for the people not to get alienated and forget about the actual impact that the Internet can provide through social media.

VIII. REFERENCE

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