Social Media and Policing: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract: In today's society the role of police and media are very important. The main aim of both organizations is to serve the public. Media can include numerous services which distribute information to the general public which include newspapers, television whether it be fact or fictional, radio and in addition the world-wide web. The primary aim of the media is to keep the public informed and influence the way that they accept and perceive changes within society. On the other hand, Police endeavor to protect the safety, liberty and freedom that all citizens are entitled. Thus, the relationship between police and media is very important in our society. With the changing trends, the importance of social media is increasing in today's world. And the police also started using social media such as facebook, twitter and whatsapp etc. to reaches out information regarding their work and valuable information to the public and to gain the public cooperation in various activities. Social media is helping in bridging the gap between police and public. In this background the present paper tried to study the impact of social media in the working of police in this present scenario of police-media relations.

Keywords: Policing, Social media, facebook, twitter, whatsapp.

Introduction

The media and the government are directly responsible for our views on everything that is happening in the world. Media is the plural form of a word called medium which was earlier developed as the meaning of an intervening agency, means, or instrument. It was first applied to newspapers two centuries ago. In the 1920s media began to appear as a singular collective noun, sometimes with the plural medias. This singular use is now common in the fields of mass communication and advertising, but it is not frequently found outside them[1]. Media includes all the numerous services which distribute information to the general public which include newspapers, television whether it be fact or fictional, radio and in addition the world-wide web. In the recent years a form of media called social media has been emerging promptly.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to analyze the impact of social media in the working of police in this present scenario of police-media relations

What is Social Media?

The media only gives the information, for example in newspaper where one can only read the information and like television and radio where one can only see or listen to the information. Any person can't give their thoughts or views regarding the information which were shown or provided through the regular media. On the other hand, in social media one can put their comments or can communicate with each other. It can be said that social media is a social instrument of communication. It is like a website that doesn't give information but can interact with the people while giving the information.

Social media is a very broad term as it covers a large range of websites. But the one common link between these websites is that one can able to interact with the website and interact with other visitors (webtrends.about.com). Here are some examples of social media websites:

- **Social News**. (Digg, Propeller, Reddit) Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them.
- **Social Networking**. (Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Linkedin, whatsapp) Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.
- **Social Photo and Video Sharing**. (YouTube, Flickr, metacafe, dailymotion, mevio,myspace) Interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions.
- **Wikis**. (Wikipedia, Wikia) Interact by adding articles and editing existing articles.

And these websites are not the only social media websites. Any website that invites to interact with the

site and with other visitors falls into the definition of social media.

With the changing trends, nowadays every organization, be it public or private started using social media as a tool to reach out to the people and communicate with their employees. Police organization is a very important organization in our society as its main duty is to maintain law and order in the society. The media and police have a very controversial relationship. The role of media is very important with regards to the positive image of the police because media has a significant part to play in shaping the attitude of the public towards the police. Though the image of police depends on the quality of service they renders, the important role of media in brightening or smearing the police image cannot be overlooked. The mission of police and media is same because purpose of both the organization is to serve the public. But, the media mostly highlights the negative role of the police and its one of the main reason that the police image among the public is going down. And the police always tried to keep things away from the media. Both the organization blames each other for their wrongdoing.

But, nowadays the police organization adopted a form of media to reaches out information regarding their work and valuable information to the public and to gain the public cooperation in various activities, the social media. The police started using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Whasapp, Youtube and many other to gain positive image from the public. In these social media sites one can put their comments and complaints to the police. Social media is helping the police to bridging in the gap with the public.

Impact of Social Media on Working of Policing
In a country that is rapidly adapting to the consumption and exchange of information in the digital space, law enforcement bodies are utilising social media platforms to overhaul their image and make meaningful connections with the citizens that they serve and protect. Facebook is the new public interest circular and the police are using the social network to interact one-on-one with citizens, provide timely updates of important information and make themselves more approachable. The fact that citizen complaints and questions are up for the general public to see pushes the authorities and page administrators to respond quickly and efficiently to posts[2].

Police departments are increasingly embracing the idea of using social media sites, such as Facebook Twitter, Whats app etc., for everything from soliciting crime tips to sharing safety-related information and improving community relations. The sites can give law enforcement an additional way to disseminate information quickly and to interact with the public. Through Facebook, for example, police can easily share crime-related pictures and videos and give the public a relatively simple way to provide feedback and tips[3].

Police in most states of India, including the traffic police are leveraging the reach of social networks, and working together with the citizens to help solve cases faster. Along with the popular network, Facebook, police are also digging into Twitter, blogs and now WhatsApp, the most popular messaging app in the country with 40 million active Indian users, to find innovative ways in crime detection [4].

- In a recent missing person case in Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh involving a boy aged 11, the police used WhatsApp to share the missing boy's photo, in addition to posting his pictures at railway stations, bus stands and local parks. The boy's photo and mobile phone numbers of his family and the police were sent to WhatsApp users across Bareilly city via different service providers. A passenger travelling in the Doon Express quickly identified the boy in the train, with the help of the WhatsApp message.

- Lately the Central Railway (CR) in Mumbai has begun to use Whatsapp to catch offenders like bag-lifters, pickpockets, molesters and rooftop travellers, by WhatsApping their photos to ticket-checkers, railway protection force (RPF) and government railway police personnel.

- While the perpetrators are sure to log onto Facebook and leave their footprints sometime, this social behaviour has also helped track them. A kidnapper was caught by tracing the IP address of the computer he was using, as he logged on to Facebook after the crime.

- City traffic police are also actively using social media to manage traffic. Back in 2012, the Delhi Traffic Police informed that it has booked 22,000 traffic offenders through its Facebook page in the two years it has been on Facebook by encouraging citizens to upload pictures of offenders and other traffic violations.

- In March 2013, Bangalore city police caught an eve teaser though a Facebook tip off.

- In March 2013, the Mumbai police set up India's first "social media lab" in association with Reliance Foundation and NASSCOM. A specially-trained team of 20 police officers working in shifts monitor social networking sites to pull out content that could be troublesome and inform the Mumbai cyber cell.

- The Rs 2,000 crore Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) launched in 2009, with the plan of linking the nation's 14,000 police stations and 6,000 supervisory offices, is being rolled out to provide cops with the tools, technology and information to facilitate criminal investigations. The ambitious plans confirm that

social media usage in crime detection is here to stay, and will only grow in the digital age[5].

- Delhi police commissioner BS Bassi launched a new helpline number [9910641064], asking the public to send audio or video messages via the instant messaging service WhatsApp "if any cop seeks a bribe or harasses a person".
- Madras High Court Bench suggested police personnel be trained in modern technologies including the use of computers, social media, mobile phones and Global Positioning System (GPS), in tracing missing persons.
- Social media and a digital presence for the police cannot replace the process of physically going to a station to lodge a serious complaint, but it can and is bridging the gap between citizens and their law enforcers[1].

Conclusion

In today's world everything is about social media. Every organization are using the help of social media to reach the world. Police organization is also using many social media sites to spread awareness and reaches out information to the public and getting many help from social media in maintaining law and order in the society. It can be said that the social media sites have a very good impact in the working of police. But it is very important to remember that using social media is not an easy task. It can create many problems and may require new ways of thinking. Police need to be very careful while using social media because just a minor mistake can lead to a very big problem.

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