Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication: Case Study on Garbage Crisis

Sharad R. Kulkarni

Student, Bachelor of Journalism,

Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Sangli Campus,

Sangli-416416 (Maharashtra)

E-mail: srkfom@gmail.com

srkimrs@rediffmail.com

Crisis Communication

DOJMC, TMV, Pune

Abstract

The information and communication technology (ICT) has transformed the way people perform their work. In fact, ICT not only reshapes the methods to manage organisational and social crises but also supports in resolving conflicts and improving productive use of resources. The use of social media in regulation and message dissemination related to different types of crisis has become a common expectation throughout the world. Social media play a crucial role in reaching up to unreached in any type of crisis. The views of crisis communication and management are changing day by day. It is obvious that social media has proved its role for effective management of almost all types of crises. There are diverse practices of crisis communication. But use of social media ensures success incommunicating potential risks cropped from crises.All stakeholders, particularly those who may be victimised due to crisis, need to be communicated as earliest as possible so that necessary cooperation could be available to minimise losses to health, hygiene, property and welfare.

The social media could be used to minimise the losses in existing crises as well as provides guidance to anticipate and control the intensity of future disasters.This study focuses on methods of using social media in regulation and dissemination of information about crisis. It further concentrates on tackling the garbage crisis. The relevant data has been collected from a sample of citizens, authorities, experts and consultants. The sample was selected from

the people living in Sangli city located in Southern Maharashtra. The paper highlights on the practices observed in the study area. Some suggestions are also given towards the best methods for mitigation of risks and crises communication.

The use of social media for a various objectives could be advantageous to individuals, and other stakeholders of the society like small groups/committees, firms, and entities of local government authorities.

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Keywords: Social Media, Crisis Communication, Garbage, ICT, Risk mitigation

1. Introduction

Advanced information and communication technology (ICT) has transformed the pattern of our livelihood and carrying businesses. In fact, ICT has proved its significance in settling organizational crises by dealing with resolving conflicts and improving productivity. The advancement of mobile media suchas smart phones integrated with Internet access and digital video equipment are simplifying the complex communication systems and the methods to interact with each another. Research studies have observed that majority of youths who trust on online communication are using forums like blogs, social networking sites, online videos, text messaging, and other communication formats. Thesocial media forums are available mostly free for expressing ideas, opinions, and thoughts related to crucial national, social and organizational issues. According to diffusion of innovation theory, there is need to share information in crisis. During crisis each one should think "out of the box" and bring something innovative to overcome challenges. Effective communication is essential to pass on information and ideas to all stakeholders for fighting with crises. Crises are the types of events that activate their classification. Crises are normally negative; and categorised according to the causes of events.

The objective of this research paper is to examine the extent to which people in study area assigned responsibility to the government agencies. It also identifies the effect of this tendency on their behavioural approaches.In addition, the study looks the use of social media in governanceand crisis communication to minimise latent risks of garbage crises. The focus is on establishing a link between crisis response strategies and the garbage crisis.

2. Literature Review

Crisis communication develops a feeling of fear and risk in individuals who may lose interest and trust in the establishment. As viewed by Barton (2001), a crisis imposes harm on the governing agencies as the negative information has been generated about these agencies

Crises are classified mainly into two categories either operational crises or reputational crises (Sohn&Lariscy, 2014). Crisis communication is valuable as it enhances preparedness and response and helps to raise the level of awareness of citizens and their ability totake the necessary measures. Coombs, (2014) definescrisis as a significant danger to operations or reputations that can have negative effects if not handled properly. A crisis may result into three related hazards including public safety, financial erosion, and reputational loss.

Governance consists of the logic of action and the causal relations between structures, interests and interactions (Kooiman, 2007). This concept has shifted from the societal to the organizational level.Linke andZerfass(2013) advocated the concept of social media governance. Social media impliedeither formalor informal structures, which monitor the actions of members within the social network. The practice of social media governanceconcerns with two different aspects, namely, a concept of governance focusing only on social media policiesand a wider spectrum of governance based on broad regulatory frameworks.

Wendling, Radisch, and Jacobzone, (2013) enlisted different challenges related to the use of social media in circumstances of crisis communication. They include the challenge of multiple players and communication channels, transparency and reliability; damaging reputation; avoiding information overload; protecting privacy while sharing data; taking care of security issues; and informing those people who are unfamiliar with social media or don't use them at all and assessing theimpact of social media as well as traditional media.

3. Research Methodology

This study was based on a qualitative survey conducted across different areas of Sangli city. The sample comprised of 54 respondents (citizens, authorities, experts and consultants) was used for this study. There was equal representation of male and female citizens. Descriptive statistics were used to assess respondents' effectivenesson a fivepoint scale from 1 (low effectiveness level) to 5 (high effectiveness level).

3.1. Objectives

The current study was focused on following objectives.

1. To identify application of social media in crisis communication
2. To understand how respondents perceive social media for crisis communication
3. To examine the correlation between crisis communication and social media

3.2. Hypothesis

H0: Social media could not be used significantly for effective crisis communication

H1: Social media could be used significantly for effective crisis communication.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Chi square test is applied to examine the hypothesis.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Social Media Dimensions

Respondents were asked about various dimensions of social media whichthey felt relevant in minimising the garbage crisis. Their opinions are represented in Table 1,

Table 1

Social MediaDimensions

Sr. No.	Dimension	Male		Female		Average
		No.	%	No.	%	%
1	Knowledge	16	59.26	19	70.37	64.82
2	Governance	20	74.08	16	59.26	66.67
3	Transparency	18	66.67	24	88.89	77.78
4	Trust	21	77.78	25	92.59	85.19
5	Confidence	15	55.56	17	62.96	59.26
6	Effectiveness	18	66.67	21	77.78	72.22

Both male and female respondents emphasised on trust as significant dimension of social media, (85%). It was followed by transparency (78%) and effective application of the technique (72%). The need of internal and external monitoring was recorded by 67% respondents. The knowledge about different social media platforms and confidence level were adjudged as required dimensions by 65% and 59% respondents respectively.

4.2. Attributes towards Social Media

Further, the respondents were askedabout attributes for effective use of social media in carrying out the work of garbage clearance. Different attributes related to use of social media and corresponding responses are compiled through Table 2.

Table 2

Attributes towards respect to Social Media

Sr. No.	Attribute	Male		Female		Average
		No.	%	No.	%	%
1	Framework	20	74.07	20	74.07	74.07

2	Legal Aspect	15	55.56	19	70.37	62.96
3	Differentiation	14	51.85	17	62.96	57.41
4	Evaluation	16	59.26	15	55.56	57.41

The knowledge about framework of social media was considered most important by 74% respondents. About 63% participants highlighted the need of knowledge regarding legal aspects associated with social media. Understandings about how social media is different from conventional media as well as methods to evaluate outcomes were considered significant by 57% citizens.

4.3. Crisis Communication Expectations

The successful crisis communication has certain expectations. The five most relevant expectations for successful crisis communication with responses are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Crisis Communication Expectations

Sr. No.	Expectations	Male		Female		Average
		No.	%	No.	%	%
1	Carefulness	23	85.19	17	62.96	74.07
2	Responsibility	24	88.89	15	55.56	72.22
3	Credibility	21	77.78	20	74.07	75.93
4	Commitment	20	74.07	18	66.67	70.37
5	Respect	22	81.48	24	88.89	85.19

Due respect to the source and actual contents of information was given priority by 85% respondents. About 76% views were in favour of credibility. The careful narration of messages felt important by 74% answerers. The responsibility of disseminating right information and commitment towards positive results were considered important respectively by 72% and 70% respondents.

4.4. Presumptions for Social Media Use

Effective results from application of social media are possible only under particular presumptions. Opinions related to presumptions are mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4

Presumptions for Social Media Use

Sr. No.	Presumptions	Male		Female		Average
		No.	%	No.	%	%
1	Skill	20	74.07	16	59.26	66.67
2	Competency	21	77.78	19	70.37	74.07
3	Responsiveness	17	62.96	19	70.37	66.67
4	Attentiveness	16	59.26	20	74.07	66.67
5	Liability	13	48.15	21	77.78	62.96

Majority of respondents (74%) pointed out that competency need to be considered as main presumption while using social media. Ability to respond quickly, attentiveness of high level and skill were adjudged as equally important (67% each). The 63% citizens perceived liability as the presumption for use of social media.

5. Hypothesis Testing

Eight elements (four each from social media and crises communication) were considered to examine the hypothesis as shown in Table 5. The opinions of respondents to corresponding questions were noted to deduce conclusion. These elements interpret the correlation between social media and crises communication.

Table 5

Hypothesis Testing

Sr. No.	Elements	Frequency		$[(O - E)^2 / E]$
		Observed	Expected	
1	Skill	18	27	2.3704
2	Competency	20	27	1.8148
3	Responsiveness	18	27	3.0000
4	Attentiveness	18	27	3.0000
5	Respect	23	27	0.5926
6	Carefulness	20	27	1.8148
7	Responsibility	20	27	2.0833
8	Credibility	21	27	0.1862
				14.8621

As the observed chi-square value(14.8621) is greater than the critical value (14.067),the null hypothesis can be rejected. Hence it has proved that,

'**Social media could be used significantly for effective crisis communication.**'

6. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

As this study has a relatively small sample sizeand was located only in a tiny geographical area, the results cannot be generalised for larger area. Different dimensions related to social media were limited. Few additional dimensions may improve the depth of the study. The more focus on understanding of social media approaches may be considered for future study. This study could be used to view a clear image of the connectivity between different sectors of the society

7. Conclusion

Use of social media for different purposes has proved to be very fruitful to individuals, social groups, organisations, and government bodies. While crises start as bad risks, effective crises supervision can diminish the harm emanating from them and, in some cases, allow authorities and citizens to emerge stronger than before the crises.

It is evident that social media has been an effective tool for communication related to crises. Due to its massive reach and ability to convey real-time information, social media could drive the crises management effectively. But, lack of trainings and guidelines create major challenges for the use of social media as a successful management tool. Based on the results, this study proposes the need for implementing a systematic approach to improve the way citizens use social media during any crisis.

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