



### Mini Review Paper

## An Analysis of Social Media Marketing Initiatives by Government of India for promotion of Public Health

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### Abstract

*Whether it is commercial marketers or government, social media is used extensively now a days. It is one of the most affordable means of direct communication with the users. Its applicability is increasing day by day. Using social media for improving the health of the people is common in developed countries. In India use of social media by government for improving public health is gaining momentum these days. The objective of the paper is to examine use of social media marketing for public health programs and its scope in health promotion in a country like India. A Content analysis of various websites and social media was done on internet. Government of India has taken various initiatives for social media use in promotion of public health. Various social media campaigns have been organized by Ministry. Social media has been used by health department. Intensive use of social media for marketing of public health programs will result in increased community participation and increased awareness.*

**Keywords:** Social media marketing, Public health, Health promotion, Social marketing, Marketing.

### Introduction

Social Media today is emerging as one of the most effective means of marketing. Whether it is commercial marketers or government, social media is very effective in communicating the message to the audience. The number of social media users is increasing day by day and it is emerging as cost effective means of direct communication with the users. Using social media for improving the health of the people is common in developed countries but in a country like India use of social media marketing by government for improving public health is gaining momentum these days<sup>1</sup>.

Social media applications allow users to collectively distribute and produce information. The main forms of social media are collaborative writing in form of Wikipedia, sharing of content in form of video eg YouTube, social networking eg Twitter, Facebook.

In case of public health promotion the primary purpose is to generate awareness, to persuade people for a particular behaviour and to reminding people about a particular aspect. While in today's scenario the companies are using social media to gain competitive advantage. It is also becoming an important means of promotion of displaying government achievements<sup>2</sup>.

With the increased use of internet and various internet based applications use of internet for marketing of public health programs is increasing and it is emerging as one of the best

means of direct interaction with the public. But it is still doubtful that in a country like India where still most of the people live in rural areas and net connectivity is an issue, whether internet based public health communication will be effective. As in our country the people who really needs the public health benefits of government are from lower strata of society and they are illiterate and without any knowledge of internet and social media. So considering use of social media for them seems irrelevant as most of them do not have access to social media nor they have knowledge about them. Also language is another barrier as most of the social media are available in English language so communicating with language is also another problem<sup>3</sup>.

In spite of all these social media marketing in public health can play an important role. There is an increased potential for government to use social media for marketing of public health programs and generating awareness among people about various diseases and disease alerts. This paper analyze how Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India is using social media marketing effectively in variety of ways to promote public health.

### Methodology

As the research aims to examine the social media marketing use by the ministry for promotion of public health initiatives so government of India Ministry of Health and Family Welfare social media initiatives were taken into consideration. The

research focused only on central government initiatives and state government social media updates were not taken into consideration. Information about various social media platforms were taken from the websites. The study mainly focused on the twitter, YouTube and Facebook account of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. They were analysed on the basis of subjects of tweets and hashtags. An analysis of number of followers and number of tweets was also done. Search was made on the basis of various disease control programs and various campaigns done by the ministry.

## Results and Discussion

Analysis of Twitter account of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (Twitter@MoHFW\_INDIA) shows that it has 2,72,582 followers and 7,455 tweets. Regular tweets of Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and Prime Minister, Narendra Modi were observed. Tweets related to Strengthening Drug regulation, Yoga, National Health Programs, Messages of celebrity for International Yoga Day, ways to prevent worm infestation, Say No To Tobacco, Diarrhoea prevention and control, Saving the girl child and implementation of Pre Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique Act (PC and PNDT Act), steps for preventing Dengue, Upgradation of government medical colleges, Polio free India, launching of various mobile based applications like Kilkari and IVR based application on pregnancy and child health, blood donation were observed.

Twitter account of National Health Portal was also observed and there were 8676 followers and 5368 tweets were there. Ministry of Ayush twitter account has 1886 tweets and 3755 followers. Twitter handle of Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda has 3498 tweets and 40,747 followers.

Various hashtags were used on twitter like Dengue, Immunization, Missionindradhanush, Tetanus, Worldpopulationday2016, diabetes. Various applications like India fights dengue were promoted and hashtags created. YouTube channel of Ministry has 955 subscriptions and various videos have been uploaded related to quitting tobacco, address by Health Minister, Mobile Telemedicine, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Iron Folic Acid Supplement, Awareness rallies, Deworming, Launch of various programs like Inactivated Polio, Mission Indradhanush song, Preventing Female Foeticide, Dengue protection, smoking prohibition, Jananai Shishu Suraksha, safe motherhood, celebrity endorsement for various health initiatives, TB, Diarrhoea management etc. A total of 81 videos were shared on YouTube by ministry. Presence is also shown on Facebook and pages like vaccinate4life were created to improve immunization. Hashtags like mainbhiasha, missionindradhanush, vaccineswork, rotavirus etc. were created.

Tweets by various departments and organizations like WHO, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Health, etc were shared on the account. Health Ministry coordinated with MyGov

website of government of India and used Sampark service for designing of e greetings and mailers have been designed for Global Hand Washing Day and World Polio Day and sent to 40 lakh citizens of India.

**Discussion:** Government of India has taken various initiatives for social media use in promotion of public health. Social media has been used regularly by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for regular updates on various issues. Various social media campaigns have been organized by Ministry on Twitter. Various issues like Diarrhoea control, National Nutrition Week, National Breast Feeding Week, Tuberculosis Survey, Eye Donation Day, Cardiovascular disease, Mental Health, Polio Day, Global Hand Washing Day. YouTube has also been used and videos related to the campaign have been uploaded on the YouTube channel. The Twitter was used during outbreak of Ebola in Western African countries and H1N1 in the country in order to spread awareness about the diseases and alerting citizens about them. Social Media has also been used by Ministry to communicate the messages to health workers like Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and ANM, Doctors and officials in health sector. Under the mass push SMS service under Sampark campaign SMS were sent in Hindi and English. Coordination has been established with My Gov website and National Informatics Centre by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare for developing creative campaigns. Special mailers have been designed on certain occasions and have been sent to citizens of India to make them aware about the issue.

Social Media Marketing of public Health programs has potential to reach a large number of people as lot of ideas can be generated by users on the social media platform. Customer generated information will be of great use and use of sharing of information related to some important aspect is of great help in promoting a particular health issue. Viral marketing which facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message or share information can be done by the use of social media. Health messages are being passed on at various social media platforms by health ministry, health minister and other important government agencies in order to generate content about a particular issue. Reminding citizens for immunization, quitting tobacco, yoga day are some of the issues used in social media marketing of public health programs<sup>4</sup>.

It was observed that most of the time twitter has been used for social media marketing communication while other social media interventions were quite less and in order to reach large number of people new social media tools needs to be explored. The number of followers on twitter is also very less as compared to a large country like India and followers base needs to be improved in order to reach more number of people.

The new generation social media allows user to share, link and collaborate with other users and this is one of the most effective feature of today's social media which was not available in earlier web pages and websites and there was only one way

communication with websites and social media or today's web 2 allows two way communication in which government can communicate directly with the users and can get feedback. This is very effective in case of large epidemic of disease as in that case social media users can also inform the authorities about the outbreak of certain disease in their area. So the social media can be used effectively by epidemiologist to get feedback about the recent epidemic in certain areas and users can contribute in informing about the outbreak of deadly disease. Governments can engage collectively in conversation that will be useful in generating awareness online<sup>5</sup>.

## Conclusion

In this research researcher has observed social media marketing initiatives of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It has been observed that Ministry is using social media to aware general public about various diseases, Branding of public health programs, Promotion of public health programs etc. The analysis of the Social Media Marketing of various public health issues by Ministry of Health & Family welfare GoI shows that social media has been used by health department. Intensive use of social media for marketing of public health programs will result in increased community participation and increased awareness.

Through the use of social media ministry can enable people to recognized various health programs and generate awareness. Potential beneficiaries of the program can communicate. A connection is established between beneficiaries and ministry.

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