Role of Social Media in Government

(With three case-studies from North-East India)

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Abstract:-

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), followed by the use of Social Networking site(s) has brought revolutionary changes to our society irrespective of age, race and region. There is a growing trend to stay connected through the Internet, and Social Media is a widely used application. A large number of for-profit and non-profit organizations are using various Social Media to promote them and advertise their products or offerings. The success in this approach has resulted in a gradual shift from using the traditional print or digital media in some scenarios. As citizens are the primary customers of Government, it is expected that Government departments start using Social Media to reach out to more and more citizens. In India, the few ministers or the Government departments that are using Social Media are getting an overwhelming response not only among the citizens but also among the outside Internet world. The positive response of the citizens is a clear indication of further use of Social Media in Government. This is a humble approach to study the response of citizens for the existing use of Social Media in Government and a sneak-peek into the Social Media framework recently approved by Government of India. The paper uses Dada mining techniques on the data gathered from three case studies of Social Media use by existing Government establishments and individuals to decipher some meaningful conclusions. Lastly, the paper suggests how various Government officials and departments can start using Social Media for the benefit of the citizens with the help of a simple framework.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The term governance has gained great usage in contemporary public administration. The use of the terms governance and public administration gained unprecedented momentum in both their quest and usage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But what we are most concerned about is the terminology of Good Governance. According to the World Bank, good governance entails sound public sector management, accountability, exchange and free flow of information and a legal framework for Good Governance has been an issue throughout the world. In a democratic form of Government, citizen participation in policy level decisions is very much sought after [1].

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought us to the era of e-Governance. Now, when we talk about Social Media in Government, we are mainly talking about an advanced component of e-Governance. E-Governance is not a project, it is actually Governance by itself; so, it not something that will get over, rather it is a place of continuous improvement as per the relevance of current time.

II. BACK-GROUND STUDY

A. *E-Governance*

Reference [2] defined e-Governance can be defined as "E-governance is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information". In another definition, e-governance is defined as "e-governance is a tool. And like any other tool, no matter how powerful, it has limited value and relevance in itself. Its value arises from its application to specific goals and objectives. E-governance is really about choice. It is about providing citizens with the ability to choose the manner in which they wish to interact with their governments. E-governance is the commitment to utilise appropriate technologies to enhance governmental relationships, both internal and external, in order to advance democratic expression, human dignity and autonomy, support economic development and encourage the fair and efficient delivery of services" [3]. In reference [4] the authors said e-Governance as "the use by the Government of web-based Internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies, to enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other Government entities or bring about improvements in Government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation. The use of ICT has led to the emergence of e-Governance. Various countries across the world are experimenting with e-Governance.

B. Levels of e-Governance

Reference [5] developed a four-stage process to depict the e-government applications evolvement as below

I.   *Informational e-Governance*, where the Government provides static websites to the citizens with information about the services which the Government offers to its citizens. This is the first level of e-Government.

II.   *Interactional e-Governance*, where the Government provides facility for citizens through its websites to send queries to the Government and the Government responds. Here, citizens can download applications for receiving services.

III. *Transactional e-Governance*, where the Government provides services to the Citizens through the websites and also provides facility for payments if necessary. There may be involvement of multiple departments in this stage.

IV.   *Transformational e-Governance*, where the Government takes the inclusiveness of IT to the highest level and makes IT the harbinger of change of the lives of millions, thus transforming the entire society.

C. Social Media

Reference [6] defined Social Media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Using Social media supported by web-based and mobile based technologies, communication can be easily turned into interactive dialogue among individuals, communities, or organizations. The use of social media is popular because it is inexpensive, easy to access and use, scalability and a high potential of individual control.

Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India has adopted the categorization of Social media by Kaplan and Haenlein [6] in its Framework & Guidelines for the use of Social Media for Indian Government Organizations. This classification has six categories:

1. Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)
2. Blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter)
3. Content communities (e.g., YouTube)
4. Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)
5. Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)
6. Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life)

Technologies that enable use of social media are blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowd sourcing and voice over IP, to name a few. Many of these social media services can be integrated via social network aggregation platforms.

D. *Use of Social Media by Governments around the world*

Various Governments organizations and individuals around the world are engaging various stakeholders for the purposes of disseminating information, seeking inputs into policy making, recruitment, and providing access to services, educating stakeholders etc**.** Here are a few examples of use of social media in different countries as obtained from the guidelines by department of Electronics and Information Technology of India [7]

I.   United States of America

Many federal and state government agencies are actively engaging with their stakeholders using social media. Some examples of use of social media are

- The White House Facebook Page and The White House Twitter profile – WhiteHouse.gov
- State Department Facebook Page
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Facebook Page
- The Twitter account of US President Mr. Barack Obama
- US Army Facebook Page

II.   Australia

- The Australian Public Service Commission in 2008 announced a set of interim protocols to agencies that are using or planning to use online media, including blogs, as a means of communication with clients and stakeholders and the Federal Government has established a *Government 2.0 Taskforce*. The Taskforce has submitted its report and its work related to increasing the openness of government and encouraging online engagement. It will be able to and incentives which may achieve or demonstrate how to accomplish government 2.0 objectives (Source: fund initiatives http://gov2.net.au/about/index.html last visited on August 29, 2011)
- Several states in Australia also have an active social media engagement strategy. For example, in Victoria, the Premier's website is used to extend consultation. The site has invested in the use of *YouTube, Facebook* and *Twitter* as well as other Web 2.0 tools such as *blogs* and *Live Chat* is used as a forum with guest visitors on moderated themes.(Source: http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/website-practice/web-2-0-a/social-networks-and-social-media -in-government/web-2-0-the-new-tools-for-democratic-conversations-a-snapshot-of-initiat ives-in-government.html)

III.   New Zealand
The New Zealand State Services Commission uses Web 2.0 space via the Participation Wiki – a community of registered users able to share information on developments internationally in the area of government innovation and the use of Web 2.0 tools.

IV.   United Kingdom
- In May 2009, the UK Cabinet Office appointed a new Director of Digital Engagement to oversee the Government's online communications strategy. The Director is expected to work across government departments to encourage, support and challenge them in moving from communicating to citizens on the web to conversing and collaborating with them through digital technology, including blogs and social networking sites such as *Twitter* and *Facebook.*

- The UK Government also launched the *Show Us a Better Way* website as a way of encouraging citizen ideas for new products that could improve the way public information is communicated (source: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807004350/http://showusabetterway.co.uk lasted visited 27/04/2011)

E. Use of Social media at the central Government level

The use of ICT into Governance in India received the boost with the introduction of National e-Governance Project (NeGP) in year 2006. Along with the implementation of basic infrastructure projects such as State Data Centre (SDC), State Wide Area Network (SWAN) and the Mission-Mode Project (MMP), Government of India also emphasised on the effective use of Social Media by the central ministry and other government departments. In order to encourage and enable government agencies to make use of Social media, a basic framework and guidelines by Department of Electronics and Information Technology of India (Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organizations 2012:7) was formulated and released in September, 2011. Reasons for which government seems to be inclined to use social media in India are:

- Enhanced Outreach: As the recent world events have demonstrated, social media have emerged as a powerful platform for forming an opinion as well as generating mass support. In India alone, various sites such as FaceBook, Orkut etc. have over 15 million users each and Twitter has about 5 million users. These sites offer an opportunity to reach out this audience at a key stroke. Many of these facilitate access through mobile devices and with nearly 900 million mobile users in India [8], an unprecedented outreach is possible.

- One-demand engagement: Social Media can connect policy makers to citizens in real time whenever need arises. In recent Libyan and middle-east crisis, as per the information mentioned in the Social Media framework guidelines [7] Ministry of External Affairs used social media platforms such as Twitter to assist locating and evacuating Indian Citizens from these locations

- One-to-one connection: Social Media platform offers the ability to connect with each and every individual. Such an interaction also enables the marginalized to participate in discussions and present their point of view, thereby improving the political position of marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and minorities in India.

Some successful examples of use of Social media by the government bodies in India in terms of the response, participation and engagement of citizens are:

- Police

The Delhi (The capital of India) Traffic Police has joined Facebook and Twitter to ease handling of traffic related issues. If we look at the updates along with the responses of the citizens, we can clearly see the usefulness of the initiative. In fact, this has brought police closer to the citizens.

- Indian Government Flagship Projects

National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), the flagship of Government of India for promoting e-Governance in India has launched its Facebook page in the month of March, 2012. This has been a long time ask from NeGP project team to start using Social media as this team is supposed to draft policies for using Social media in India.

- Central Ministry

The Public Diplomacy (PD) division of the Ministry of External Affairs saw merit in leveraging social media to connect with the masses with around 31,000 followers. It made its debut on Twitter with the user id "Indian diplomacy". It was used very successfully in the recent crisis in Libya and Middle East as mentioned in Social Media framework and guidelines of Govt. of India [7].

- Prime Minister's office

This is one of the most famous twitter accounts among Indians. All the notifications and order from Prime Minister's office are made available by the account. Most of the times, the updates from PMOIndia start 'trending' in India regional trending page.

- Central Tihar Jail

Tihar Prison, popularly known as Tihar Jail, located near New Delhi is the largest complex of prisons in South Asia [9]. As a host of the notorious corruption scam 'stars' of India, Tihar jail Facebook account has couple of thousands of 'friends' and the Jail authority updates the Facebook wall quite frequently.

F. Use of Social Media by Governments of various Indian States
Among the use of Social Media by Indian states, some of the prominent examples are

- Twitter page of the chief minister for the state of Gujarat, Mr. Narendra Modi (http://twitter.com/narendramodi): Acclaimed as India's one of the most successful chief ministers and acclaimed to be a potential candidate of next Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi's twitter account has around 0.8 million followers. His tweets are heavily discussed in Indian media, a fact which has helped Mr Modi to build a national image outside Gujarat. He has also become the first politician of India to interact directly with citizen via social media on 31.08.2012

- The Indore Police (Indore is the commercial capital of the state of Madhya Pradesh) Department (http://www.indorepolice.org): Indore police has been using ICT extensively with its own blog, twitter account, Facebook page ,online and mobile complaint forms, a Google map of police stations and a digital crime mapped to track criminal activities in the region.

- Twitter page of the chief minister for the state of Jammu & Kashmir, Mr. Omar Abdullah (https://twitter.com/abdullah_omar): Omar Abdullah strongly and efficiently used his twitter account to clarify matters during the controversies related to Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and his personal life.

- The Gurgaon (Gurgaon is the industrial and financial center of the state of Haryana, only 30 KM from the national capital) Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Municipal-Corporation-of Delhi/106030789427235#!/mcgurgaon): Gurgaon Municipal Corporation is maintaining the Facebook page since last year. As Gurgaon is expanding with the rising of many IT companies, this portal has really helped the Government listen to the concerns of the new immigrant as well as the old citizens of the city.

III. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to explore the engagement of Indian citizens to the initiatives of Social Media use by the Government bodies in India. Three case studies from the Social media initiatives by government bodies in North-eastern India are used for the analyses. The paper also explores the guidelines by the Government of India for the use of Social Media and provides some suggestions to Government department for developing a Framework for adoption of Social Media.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

The paper takes three case studies of the use of Social Media by government organization and individuals from North-Eastern part of India. After doing statistical analysis of the data collected for these cases, the paper tries to represent the knowledge in Observation and discussion.

A. North East India

Three case studies are selected from North East India, consisting of eight Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. North-eastern states are unique from rest of India in many ways such as difficult and uneven terrain, physical appearance, culture and religious belief of the indigenous people of the region, the insurgency problem that is deep rooted in almost every states and 90% of the its entire border are international borders with China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. This region comprises of 4% of Indian population but 33% of India's cultural and linguistic diversity as mentioned in the Instruction manual for Houselisting and Housing Census [10]

North East India is known to be the most economic backward region of the country. The insurgency problems, highly difficult geographical terrain and weak form of state Governance are some of the prominent reasons behind the current economic state of this part of India. Central Government has given special focus in the development of the region through the expansion of ICT and E-Governance by putting more money in its flagship projects National e-Governance Plan as accepted in IT Ministers' meet at Shillong on 18th June, 2012. So, this is an interesting region to watch for in the coming days.

B. Case Studies
Three case studies are used to explore usage of Social media by Government departments and the cabinet ministers and engagement of citizens.

I.   Case Study 1

Title: Face Book page of Shillong (Capital of Meghalaya, India) Traffic Police, Home Ministry Department, Government of Meghalaya.

Page created on   : January, 2011
Total Likes   : 2074 (as on 28th May, 2012)
Observation period   : 1st February, 2011 to 30[th]April, 2012 (Total: 15 months)
Total updates found   : 99
Average updates per month   : 6.6

From Table 1 and Fig.1 we obtain the following observations:

a. The number of updates are increasing since the creation of the page
b. The number of citizen participation and interaction are directly related to the number of updates by the department (as evident from Fig. 1)
c. The designated authority in the police office, who repeatedly answers the queries of the citizen, has helped making the Facebook page INTERACTIVE i.e. the second level of e-Governance.
d. It is observed that the highest number of citizen participation and interaction comes when
    i.   The traffic police announces some new law/rules/forecast
    ii. The traffic police announces any jam in some parts of the city
e. The participation of the citizen is less when citizens are least affected by the update. For example, when there is a smooth running of traffic throughout the city.
f. No data is visible for the months of November and December of 2011. When contacted with the Shillong Traffic Police, we were told that updates were continuously published from their side during hose moths too. But somehow, those updates are not visible now. No further inference can be drawn on that point.

TABLE 1: Shillong Traffic Police Facebook Page Data

Period of Update (Randomly selected)	Number of Traffic police updates	Number of Public Response (Number of 'likes')	Number of Public Participation (Number of comments)
February 2011	1	10	3
March 2011	1	6	4
May 2011	2	18	26
June 2011	3	38	13
July 2011	1	8	1
August 2011	5	45	19
September 2011	3	25	12
October 2011	3	29	13
November 2011	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data
December 2011	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data
January 2012	19	174	42
February 2012	20	134	44
March 2012	20	114	Incomplete Data
April 2012	21	Incomplete Data	43
Total	**99**	**601**	**220**

Source: Shillong Traffic Police Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shillong-Traffic-Police

Fig. 1: Shillong Traffic Police Facebook Page Data (Graphical Representation)
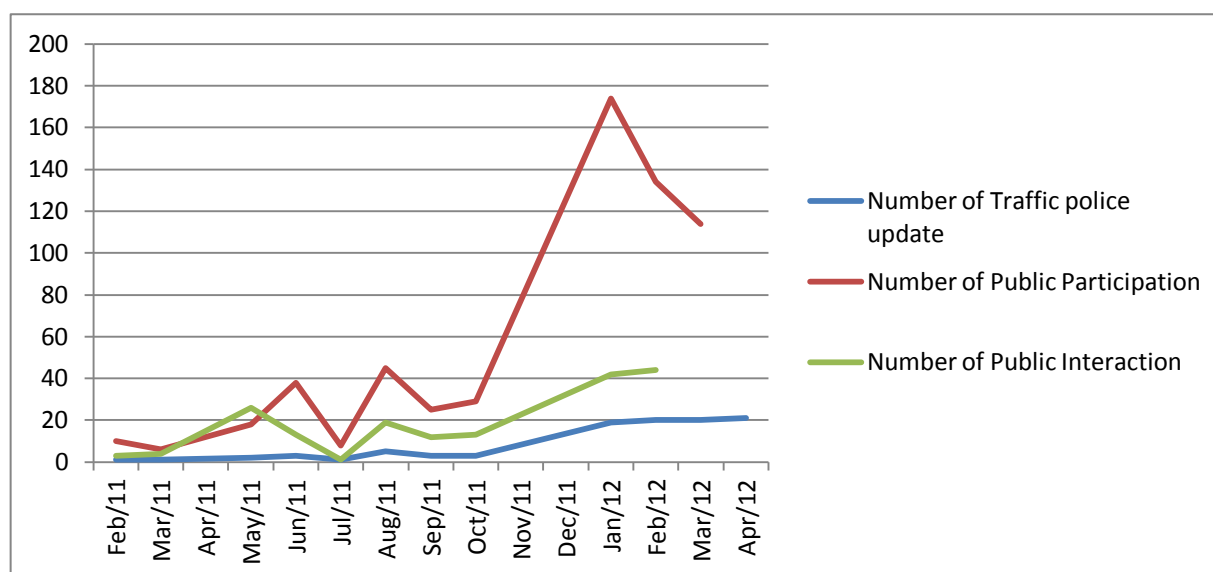
Source: Author

II.   Case Study 2

Title: Face Book page of Education and Health Minister of Assam, Minister of Assam Province for Education, Health & Family Welfare and Assam Accord Implementation, Government of Assam

Page created on   : 27th February, 2010
Total Likes   : 14288 (as on 28th May, 2012)
Total updates found   : 50
Average update/ day   : 1.3
Observation period   : 21st January, 12 to 8th March, 12

The TABLE 2 shows the detail data analysis of the considered 50 updates against the response of the public. The Public responses are sub-divided into three categories:

- Public Response=> Total 'likes' of the update
- Public Participation => Total 'comments' of the update
- Public Perception of Usefulness=> Total 'shares' of the update

The following observations are gained from TABLE 2 & TABLE 3 and Fig. 2 & Fig.3-

1. More than 50% of total updates of this Facebook page are related to Government news and update. Citizens' consider these update more important as shown by Public Participation and Public Perception of usefulness.

2. Public has started using Social Media as a discussion forum – not necessarily with the minister, but among themselves also. The update number 16(U16), which was an update related to teacher Eligibility Test (Government of Assam recruited 27000 teachers by this particular Eligibility test recently), a total of 1123 citizens participated in discussion. This shows an increasing trend and also a need to have Social Media by concerned departments (Education in this case).

3. The Public Response (Number of 'likes') for the Personal updates is quite high; this implies even if the update is not affecting the public, people used to acknowledge the minister.

4. It is seen the location specific updates are mainly commented or shared by the citizens of that particular location. Citizens also use that opportunity to point out other problems of that particular location.

5. The minister does not maintain the FB page by himself; hence he does not participate in the discussions/comments. This raises the possibility of wrong interpretation of his updates in some cases, unless some other citizen points out the issue. This Facebook page is in the first level of e-Governance i.e. Informational.

**TABLE 2:** Facebook Page Data of Education and Health Minister of Assam

Update	Category	Public Response(No. of likes)	Public Participation (No. of comments)	Public Perception of Usefulness (No. of sharing)
U1	LOC	350	144	3
U2	PSN	236	26	3
U3	LOC	152	54	3
U4	LOC	254	60	5
U5	LOC	186	29	1
U6	GOV	170	41	3
U7	GOV	198	34	2
U8	PSN	348	89	1
U9	GOV	202	174	6
U10	GOV	234	65	4
U11	GOV	98	20	2
U12	LOC	179	37	1
U13	PSN	178	27	2
U14	LOC	220	58	3
U15	LOC	116	70	4
U16	GOV	249	1123	3
U17	GOV	178	38	3
U18	GOV	248	78	14
U19	GOV	228	55	19
U20	LOC	172	24	2
U21	GOV	364	107	4
U22	GOV	471	461	28

U23	LOC	139	15	5
U24	LOC	390	90	8
U25	LOC	165	43	4
U26	GOV	101	24	8
U27	GOV	235	111	16
U28	GOV	420	170	27
U29	GOV	307	78	13
U30	LOC	150	40	7
U31	GOV	142	42	14
U32	GOV	142	20	11
U33	PSN	171	167	14
U34	GOV	197	115	22
U35	LOC	286	46	13
U36	GOV	278	102	20
U37	GOV	388	289	30
U38	PSN	238	37	14
U39	PSN	295	60	11
U40	LOC	206	39	7
U41	LOC	149	31	11
U42	GOV	120	39	19
U43	PSN	208	90	9
U44	PSN	371	144	7
U45	LOC	91	33	11
U46	GOV	132	33	13
U47	GOV	133	34	11
U48	LOC	132	41	13
U49	GOV	190	72	13
U50	GOV	104	30	11
Total		**10911**	**4849**	**478**

(GOV- Government related updates, LOC- Location specific updates, PSN- Personal updates)

Source: *Facebook page of Dr. Himanta Bishwa Sarma (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Himanta-Biswa-Sarma)*

Fig. 2: Updates by Education and Health Minister of Assam: Categorised into three Types
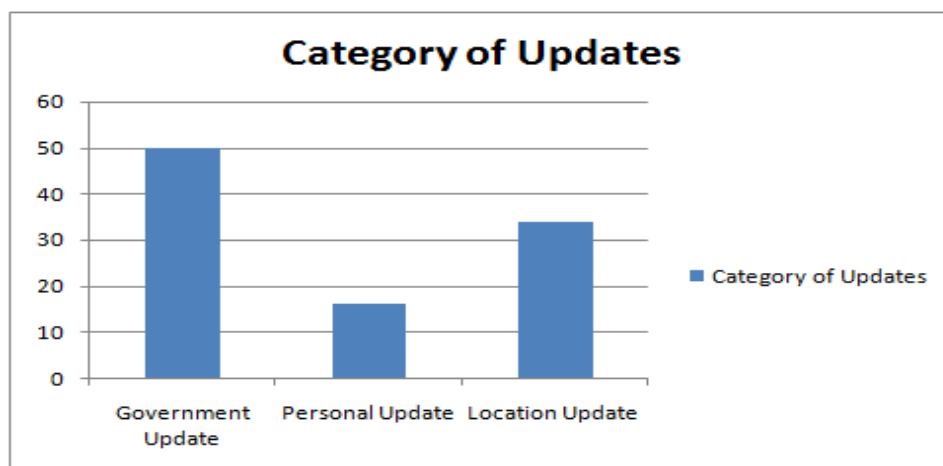
Source: Author

- **Government related updates**: Updates related to Government policies, announcements, law amendments, declaration and notifications
- **Personal updates**: Updates related to his personal life, interest and family, tribute to people
- **Location specific updates**: Updates related to the minister's place of visit on that particular day for Government/personal purposes.

TABLE 3: Effect on Public by the different Categories of UpdatesS

Update Categories->	Government Related	Personal	Location Specific
Total Public Response (No. of likes)	5529	2045	3337
Total Public participation(No. of comments)	3355	640	854
Total Public Perception of Usefulness (No. of sharing)	316	61	101
Average Public Response per category	221	256	196
Average Public Participation per category	93*	80	50
Average Public Perception of Usefulness per category	13	8	6

*P*ublic participation value of U16 is ignored because it is an outlier (the value is extreme -related to an examination result)*

The calculation of Average Public Response per category (say for Government related):

[Total number of likes of GOV updates] / [Total number of GOV updates]

Fig. 3: Average Response per Category of Updates
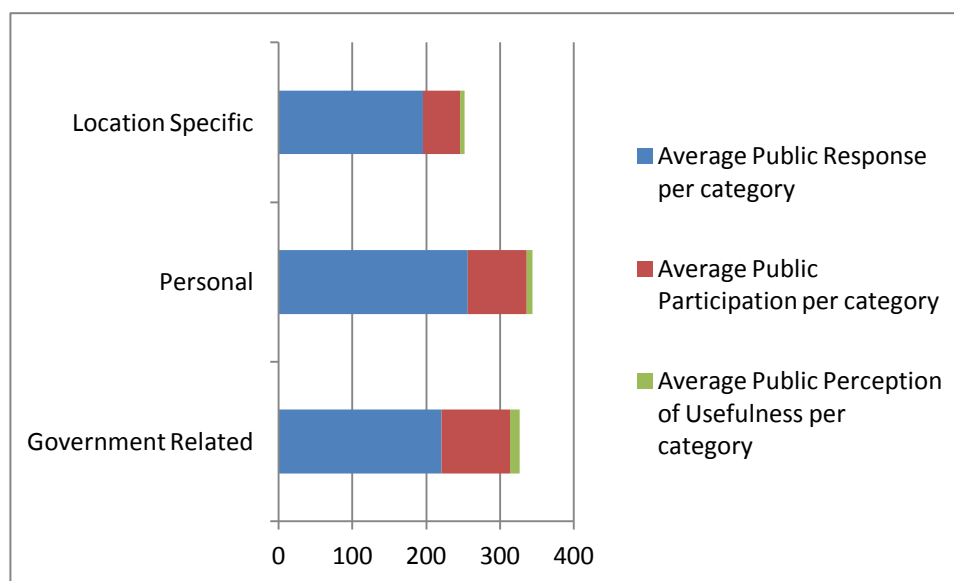
Source: Author

III.   Case Study 3

Title: Twitter Account of Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma, Minister of Assam Province for Education, Health & Family Welfare and Assam Accord Implementation, Government of Assam

Total tweets   : 3433 (as on 28th May, 2012)
Total followers   : 5819 (as on 28th May, 2012)
Twitter platform   : Twitter for Blackberry
Observation period   : March 27, 2012 to May 27, 2012
Average update(s)/ day   : 2.71

We have taken the Twitter case study of the Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the same minister as in case study 2, just to have a comparison between two types of Social media viz. Facebook and Twitter. However, we have tried to find out a few a patterns from the data available.

From The TABLE 4 & TABLE 5 and Fig. 4 of case study 3 we can obtain the following observations:

1. If we consider the Retweets are the public's perceptions of usefulness then from the figure 3 it can be concluded that people are finding the tweets more useful as time passes. Even the participating number is also growing with time. The increasing trend of percentage of Retweets for the four quarters reflects the same (Fig. 3).

2. 95.83% of the tweets are related to Government news or initiatives. Even if there are location specific updates, those are purely Government related. But in Facebook updates, we observed that some of the place updates are related to the personal affairs of the Minister such as the family vacation.

3. The twitter account is a perfect example of Interactive form of e-governance, where the Government provides facility for citizens through its websites to send queries to the Government and the Government responds(the second level of Governance, as mentioned) The minister himself manages the account from his Blackberry mobile and replies to citizen's query directly.

4. Replying all queries from citizens is a difficult task. While the minister tries his best, but he seems to get frustrated many a times. Tweet like this is an example- *'I can't run a Ministry on twitter; I am not going to answer any more query on this topic'*. This clearly shows the necessity of a dedicated person/group to handle Social Media.

TABLE 4: Twitter Data of DR. Himanta Biswa Sarma Showing Category and Retweets

Date	Government related tweets	Number of Retweet*(s) by Public
27th March	1	4
28th March	0	0
29th March	4	6
30th March	1	7
31st March	3	11
1st April	0	0
2nd April	2	2
3rd April	2	3
4th April	2	9
5th April	0	0
6th April	1	1
7th April	0	0
8th April	1	7
9th April	2	9
10th April	3	9
11th April	1	1
12th April	0	0
13th April	2	18
14th April	0	0
15th April	1	7
16th April	0	0
17th April	1	1
18th April	0	0
19th April	6	37
20th April	1	3
21st April	5	18
22nd April	4	16
23rd April	1	2
24th April	5	5
25th April	1	2
26th April	2	6
27th April	3	15
28th April	8	33
29th April	7	49
30th April	6	23
1st May	3	12
2nd May	0	0
3rd May	2	3
4th May	5	12
5th May	3	11
6th May	2	3
7th May	1	1
8th May	2	7
9th May	1	6
10th May	2	10
11th May	2	6
12th May	3	13
13th May	2	7
14th May	0	0
15th May	2	15
16th May	3	9
17th May	3	11
18th May	2	14
19th May	4	35
20th May	2	11
21st May	0	0
22nd May	2	7
23rd May	2	6
24th May	3	11
25th May	0	0
26th May	1	4
27th May	7	17

Source: https://twitter.com/himantabiswa

(*Retweet: Every follower of a Twitter account has the option of retweeting. If you retweet a particular tweet, that tweet will be shown to all your followers. This is almost same as the 'Share' feature of Facebook)

For easy analysis of the twitter data we have grouped them in four quarters:
- 1st quarter:27/03/2012 to 13/04/2012
- 2nd quarter: 14/04/2012 to 28/04/2012
- 3rd quarter: 29/04/2012 to 13/05/2012
- 4th quarter: 14/05/2012 to 27/05/2012

TABLE 6: The Quarter Wise Analysis of Twitter DataATA

Phases	Total Government Related Updates	'Retweeted' by Followers	% of 'Retweet' (round-off value is taken)
First Quarter	25	87	35
Second Quarter	38	144	38
Third Quarter	41	164	40
Fourth Quarter	33	140	43

Fig. 4: The Graph of Citizen Participation per Quater
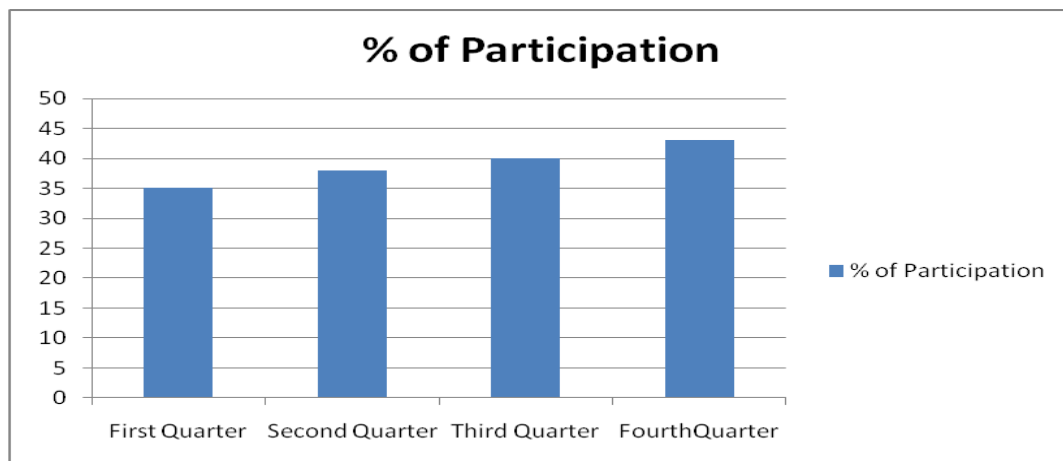
Source: Author

V. DISCUSSION

A. Selection of Social Media

If we restrict our discussion only to Facebook and Twitter (not considering all the six forms of Social Media), here are some of the observations evident from the above case studies. Based on the requirement of individual department or individual on the properties described below, the selection can be done accordingly

Facebook Page/Account:
1. Citizen participation is more in this case as every citizen can view the comments posted by the other citizen as well.
2. Popularity is more in Facebook, even naïve people can make out easily all the updates just by 'liking' a page.

3. As lot of citizen participation is anticipated in Facebook, it is advisable to have a dedicated team to manage the updates and participate in the discussion that follows any update.

4. The length of one Facebook update is not restricted to a number of characters (unlike Twitter). The attachment of a video or a picture with any update is quite convenient.

Twitter Account:

1. Twitter is usually preferred by Individuals, say for Ministers or high-ranked officers.
2. Opportunity for citizens to directly interact with the person is more here.
3. Updates can't exceed 140 words- have to be short and simple.
4. Many-to-many conversation is not possible in twitter.

B. Levels of e-governance and Social Media

As per levels of e-Governance, Social Media can play the role as medium of

I)   Informative   ii) Interactive   iii) Transactional   iv) Transformational

The use of Social Media by Government in India has reached only the second level. The crucial point here is again the need of dedicated person/group to manage the Social Media.

We can see Shillong Traffic Page is quite interactive compared to the Facebook page the Assam Minister. Most of the comments in the later case are among the citizens only not with the minister.

Twitter account is an exception here. The Minister has interacted with as many as 28 people in one particular day. The short form of communication that Twitter user usually follows (Twitter has a character restriction of 140 per tweet) is facilitating the interactive form of Governance.

C. Relationship with traditional media

It has been noticed that many Government decision and updates are available in Twitter or Facebook page far before those are published in Newspaper or waved via television. In fact, many updates are printed in the newspaper referring to the quote in Social Media. This particularly observation has come out while studying the Social media updates of Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Education and Health Minister of Assam.

The observation suggests that a proper and planned use of Social Media has a potential to reduce the burden of issuing press notice in other traditional media. In addition, an effective use of social media may increase the popularity of the minister.

VI. A look on Government of India guideline for use of Social Media

After watching the popularity and benefits of Social Media, many Government departments both at the central and state level are considering the use of Social Media officially. But there are many questions such as whether they can use your current website for the purpose, necessity of extra resource, the security and privacy issues and so on.

To help government organizations engage more fruitfully with stakeholders using the various social media platforms, Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has published a 'Framework and Guidelines for use of Social Media for Government Organizations' in September, 2011 (This was accepted in April, 2012). Every Government departments are suggested to stick to these guidelines as described below:

I.   Well Defined Objective: Social media has a potential of becoming a tool for multiple tasks. A pre-planned objective for the use of social media may result into the desired outcome. That's why if the government departments and officials define the objectives of using social Media, it may provide the measurable results. The objective may be seeking feedback from citizens, or sharing information or a combination of seeking feedback and sharing information. More creative objectives that may engage the users can be designed with careful planning.

II. Choosing platforms: Though Social Networking sites are the most favourite Social Media platform, this is not necessary. Facebook and Twitter seem to be favourites for many. Also, a department should decide whether they will use existing external platform or create their own communication platform. New laws and scopes have to be drafted accordingly.

III. Governance Structure: A solid Governance structure is very much needed for the use of Social Media mainly for two reasons- a) once published the news spread exponentially, b) it is 24x7 platforms which needs instant gratification. Some of the key aspects of Social Media governance include- a) Account governance, b) Response and Responsiveness, c) Resource governance, d) Content governance, e) Legal provisions, f) Data and Information Security governance.

IV. Communication Strategy: Main thing to take care here is design a strategy how to integrate Social Media into current communication procedure and to setup the frequency of the updates via Facebook Page, Twitter account or in any other media.

V.   Creating Pilot: As Social Media is new form of communication, that too using ICT, which itself is quite new, Government of India suggests taking up a pilot project first before actual roll-out.

VI.   Engagement Analysis: Because Government will not have much control on the data generated by Social Media platforms, it is important to Social Media monitoring strategy. Data analysis and reporting will be an important part. Social Network Analysis (SNA) software can come handy in doing this.

VII.   Institutionalize Social Media: The final step is to ensure when the actual roll-out of the projects happens, it is linked to existing administrative communication structure.

VII. A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Now keeping in mind the above guidelines and also taking into account the hesitant mind-set our Government officials have for the use of ICT (and invariably Social Media), we want to suggest a quick, simple and effective framework, which any Government department/organization can adopt.

TABLE 7: A Proposed Guideline for Quick- on -Boarding

Properties	Selection	Reasons
Type of Social Media	A Facebook page	Number of people is more in India in FB
Pilot/Rollout	Pilot	We want quick and simple
Communication Frequency	One update per day	Main idea is to understand how citizens respond
Response Strategy	Respond: Only questions Do not respond: Appreciations Time: A post older than 3 days need not to be replied	
Content	Notice Board/General Advice/ Holiday notice/ ask feedback	Simple enough so that we don't need much Governance to start with
Resource allocation	One person (preferably the person in charge of departmental website)	Let there be no wait time for hiring new resource for as simple as one update per day
Engagement of higher officers	No Need, except monitoring the progress	It is observed the resistance for using ICT is more among higher officers

Next Step of the framework: After reviewing the progress for 2 months, the Department/ organization can think of increasing the content, frequency and response strategy to make it more interactive.

The next step will be to go to the second level of Governance.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From the study of the three case studies and looking at the growing trend around the world, the use of Social Media is going to be inevitable for the Government departments and individuals. This paper has provided a 'Get Set Go' framework if any department want to start using Social Media. We expect to see a better reach of Governance with the use of Social Media in the near future.

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