POTENTIALS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COMMUNICATION OF GOVERNMENT SCHEMES: LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The government of India has introduced thousands of welfare schemes for the social security of the citizens, however, except for very few schemes the general awareness about welfare schemes is low, impacting the success and objective of the schemes. The increased user base of social media in India prompted the authors of this literature review to examine the potential of social media as a tool for government-to-citizen communication and engagement. The review explores the benefits, challenges, and strategic considerations of social media It also examines the deficiencies of unidirectional conventional media versus the advantages of multidirectional social media. This review synthesizes findings from 50 peer-reviewed papers, to explore the value of social media to communicate government welfare schemes. The research indicates that popular platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube may be used to connect with citizens, disseminate information, and foster engagement. It is concluded that social media can complement radio, television, and newspapers, however, the complete replacement of conventional media is not recommended. The strategic and systematic deployment of social media may help shaping public opinion, fostering both consensus and dissent.

Keywords – Social-media, Government Communication, Citizen Engagement, Welfare schemes, Engagement framework.

INTRODUCTION

Effective governmental communication helps foster connections with citizens; conversely, ineffective communication by governments has led to significant public perplexity, and misinterpretation (Kim & Kreps, 2020); which has been observed in communicating welfare schemes in India. Since the 2000s the government of India has made a substantial expansion of welfare schemes and currently, more than 2200 schemes are run by the government of India (*Government of India Scheme*, 2024) however the awareness levels regarding social welfare schemes among the Indian population vary significantly, ranging from 49.5% to 97.3% (Goswami et al., 2019a). The lack of proper communication channels has been noted as a hindrance to the proper implementation of these schemes (Jayanthi & Sunethra, 2022). Utilization of social networks, such as women's self-help groups, has been shown to improve access to schemes. However, challenges persist with factors like capacity, attitudes, and participation influencing the success of such initiatives. Communicating welfare schemes in India needs a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing implementation processes, improving communication strategies, raising awareness, and promoting citizen engagement. Social media may play a crucial role with its features like direct interaction, real-time feedback, address concerns, collaborate on public policy issues, increase transparency, public participation, and improve service delivery.

In this article, the authors endeavors to scrutinize the social media relevance and influence on governmental communication with a centralized question, if social media can be used to increase citizen engagement for awareness of welfare schemes in India.

The authors have organized the paper starting with the exploration of the social media market in India followed by the rationale behind this study, methodology then a literature review. The literature review part has been subdivided categorically to explore the usage of traditional media in government, the advantages of social media, its usage in the government of India and the social media models proposed by different authors to enhance citizen engagement. Research gaps are identified, thorough discussion on literature review has been carried out and ultimate conclusions have been drawn.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKET IN INDIA

Research indicates that 57% of people in the world are using social media platforms (Lughbi, 2024). Globally, this number is rising year on year basis, from 2010 to 2017 it increased from 0.97 billion to 2.46 billion (Soheylizad & Moeini, 2019). In India, approximately 90% of internet users are active on social media sites, with a significant portion falling within the 18 to 24 age group (Putta et al., 2022). In rural India social media users have increased by 100% over the past year (C.K, 2016). Applications like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp have emerged as popular choices among Indian users, reflecting the country's high social media usage ranking globally. Research indicates Facebook users in India will be 444.2 million in 2022-2023, up from 281 million in 2018 (Chakraborty & Chowdhury, 2021), and monthly users of YouTube is 265 million (Palakodety & KhudaBukhsh, 2020).

The Indian digital media market is expanding rapidly due to the increasing affordability of smartphones and the availability of high-speed internet connectivity. This growth is further propelled by a surge in advertising revenues, leading to a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.9% in the media and entertainment industry from FY 17-18 (Ahuja, 2022). Social media has emerged as a vital tool for marketers to interact with consumers and advertise products and services.

## RATIONALE BEHIND THIS STUDY

Currently, more than 2200 schemes are run by the state and central government of India (*Government of India Scheme*, 2024), including 300 Business & Entrepreneurship schemes to promote entrepreneurship among Indian youth, however, general awareness about welfare schemes varies from 49.5% to 97.3% (Goswami et al., 2019b). Increased availability of smartphones with the internet and applications like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp triggered the authors to explore the possibilities of disseminating information on Business & Entrepreneurship welfare schemes through social media. Unlike radio, television and newspapers social media allow customization and tailoring of messages to specific target groups of specific locations considering their browsing behaviour, which results in personalized communication with more chances of success. However, a detailed literature review is required to synthesize insights from various studies, governments can develop effective strategies to utilize the power of social media for improved public engagement and communication strategy.

The authors reviewed 50 numbers of related peer-reviewed papers with a centralized research question, if the Government of India use social media to campaign and communicate with the stakeholders of Business & Entrepreneurship schemes for successful delivery?

METHODOLOGY

The authors have reviewed the existing literature published between 2010 and 2024 on social media usage in communicating Government Welfare Schemes. Identification of relevant papers was done through a thorough Google Scholar and ResearchGate; search using specific keywords such as 'Social media', 'India', 'traditional media communication', 'social media communication and India and welfare schemes'. This search yielded a substantial number of scholarly articles, research papers, commentaries, and online resources. Only peer-reviewed publications from the specified timeframe were included in the analysis. A total of 50 papers were chosen as the sample for this research. These selected papers were meticulously scrutinized to grasp their core concepts and determine their relevance in addressing the research questions. Furthermore, insights from researchers with expertise in social media were leveraged to conclude the ongoing trends in socio-political communication. Figure 1 shows the number of articles reviewed by the authors in the context of social media communication for the government welfare schemes.

Figure 1: Graphical representation of the number of Articles reviewed (2010 – 2024)
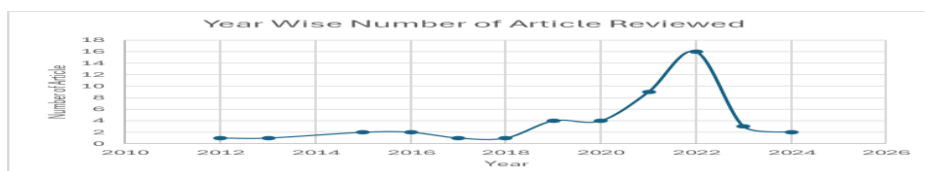
Source: Author's computation

The authors have followed a narrative literature review method (Green et al., 2006), useful for identifying gaps in the existing literature, consolidating review findings, and addressing topics broadly (Freeman & Peisah, 2021). Narrative reviews do not follow a predetermined method and can incorp orate various styles without specific methods being determined (Handayani et al., 2021) allowing a comprehensive analysis by critically examining and summarizing theories, concepts, and findings from diverse sources (Hettithanthri & Hansen, 2021) to provide recommendations to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers (Newman et al., 2018). In the context of academic research, narrative literature reviews are very important in examining and interpreting prior knowledge on a given topic (Basyir et al., 2020), involve a credible and in-depth analysis of a subject domain, allowing for a critical evaluation of existing literature (Cowley et al., 2015). Table 1 shows the number of articles reviewed from year 2012 till 2024 with reference to the theme of the paper.

Table 1: Summary of the citation types of articles reviewed

| Year	Number of Articles	Total Cites	Supporting Cites	Mentioning Cites	Contrasting Cites	No. of Citing Publications
2012	1	197	5	186	0	291
2013	1	258	9	233	0	330
2015	2	103	6	95	0	88
2016	2	1	0	1	0	10
2017	1	16	0	16	0	25
2018	1	1	0	1	0	2
2019	4	19	2	15	2	32
2020	4	135	3	129	0	198
2021	9	256	4	242	0	394
2022	16	118	3	113	0	178
2023	3	5	0	5	0	6
2024	2	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	**46**	**1109**	**32**	**1036**	**2**	**1555**

Source: Author's computation

Overall process of this narrative literature review research involved several key steps such as preparation, defining search terms, setting selection criteria, reviewing abstracts and articles, and synthesizing the results. The authors made an attempt to clarify working definitions, and conceptual boundaries, and provide a systematic overview of the literature, albeit excluding the strict structure of a traditional systematic review. The major objective of this study was to explore the research gap in communicating welfare schemes to Indian citizens using social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW
This section is categorized into various domains that are prominent in the existing literature. The thorough and comprehensive examination of the research papers enabled the scholars to identify relevant themes for addressing the research inquiries. Figure 2 shows year-wise citation (in numbers).

Figure 2: Year-wise quantification of citation types of the Articles reviewed
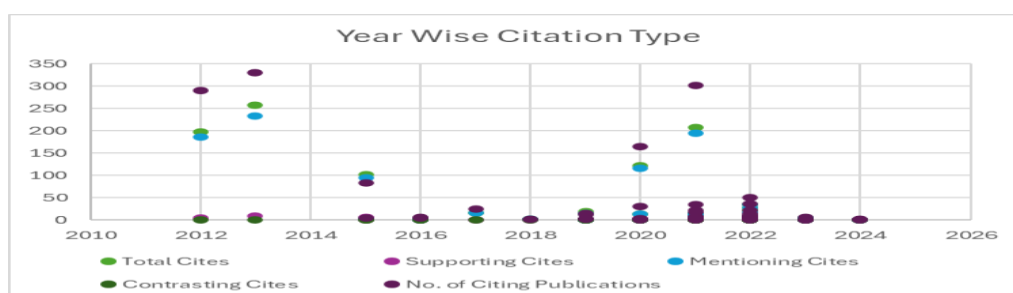
Source: Author's computation

TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Traditional media, encompassing newspapers, television, and radio, have long been primary communication channels for governments (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). However, social media applications offer direct interaction with citizens, allowing for real-time updates, engagement, and dissemination of information (Lin & Kant, 2021). Studies have highlighted the significance of the effectiveness of communication in crisis periods enhancing citizen engagement (Han & Baird, 2024). Governments use social media for information dissemination, citizen participation, empowerment, and inclusion in decision-making processes (Lin & Kant, 2021).

A study by (Al-Omoush et al., 2023) shows social media offer advantages in terms of immediacy and interactivity, but they also present challenges. The effectiveness of government communication for social media platforms can vary on the basis of the type of media used and the emotional experience of users (Wang et al., 2022).

Rajagopalan & Ravi (2020) studied the use of social media to communicate voters and they found that it is significantly enhanced the convenience of communicating with society.

In contrast, the research of Reveilhac, (2022) highlighted traditional media still hold sway in reaching certain demographics and providing in-depth coverage. However, social media's ability to bypass traditional gatekeepers and engage directly with the public. Various researchers like Hussin et al., (2024); Hansson & Page, (2023); Nguyen et al., (2022) indicated that effective use of social media requires an understanding of user behaviour, legitimacy in communication, and the interactive component of political communication.

Research conducted by Bhandari & Bansal, (2019) indicated that the security and privacy concerns due to site characteristics, privacy scams, perceived benefits, legislative measures, and user profile may keep users away from social media. Figure 3 shows the authors of the reviewed articles and number of citations and types as well.

Figure 3: Authors of the articles reviewed and citation types
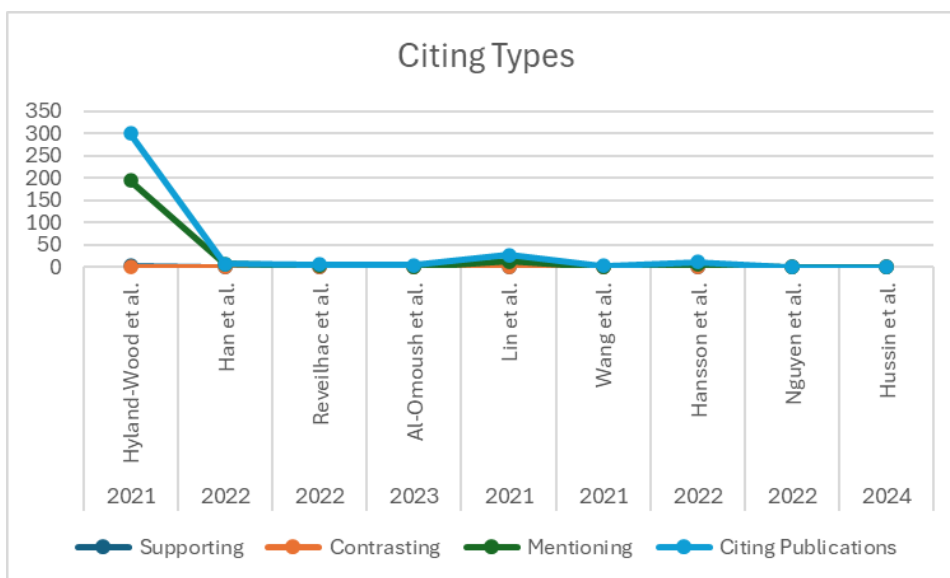
Source: Author's computation

It is highlighted that traditional media offer credibility and reach, while social media provide immediacy, engagement, and interactivity. Governments must navigate the strengths and limitations of both mediums to ensure effective communication, transparency, and public trust.

ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Research has emphasized the crucial significance of social media applications in two-way interactive communication between governments and citizens (Gunasekeran et al., 2022). Studies show that social media allows citizens to actively contribute to decision-making, policy formulation, and initiatives to enhance public services (Lin & Kant, 2021). Research of (Han & Baird, 2024) has indicated that government crisis messaging on

social media can indeed boost citizen engagement. For instance, the study of (Kada et al., 2022) shows that the Canadian government effectively used Twitter during the pandemic. Similarly, a study in Italy demonstrated the use of social media in government communication during COVID-19 (Fissi et al., 2022). Studies by (Jennings et al., 2021), shows the ways social media can facilitate political deliberation and increase citizen involvement in governance. The research conducted by Peeters et al., (2023) aims to broaden the reach of the audience, stimulate dynamic interactions, encourage citizen responses, and create engagement opportunities. The scholarly article by Schwoerer, (2023) investigates Twitter activity during amendments to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regulations by the United States. Hodzi & Zihnioğlu, (2024) explore the potential of social media as a tool for citizen-led accountability, alternative narratives, influence political discourse, and establish a foundation for evidence-based advocacy in local conflicts.

Research demonstrated that social media platforms act as catalysts for citizen-led movements, allowing individuals to mobilize, organize, and advocate for social and political change (Al-Omoush et al., 2023), although success may be dependent on the personality traits of the users, psychological characteristics, and external support (Perukshan et al., 2022).

Through monitoring online conversations, analyzing trends, and collecting feedback from social media users, governments can gain a deeper understanding of public opinion and tailor their communication strategies accordingly (Bergman et al., 2022).

## SOCIAL MEDIA IN GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
Verma et al., (2017) show that Twitter, Facebook, and government portals, Indian authorities can enhance citizen engagement, foster transparency, and build trust with the public.

The study of Dhiman & Toshniwal (2022), Peterson et al., (2023), has explored the use of AI-based frameworks to assess the involvement of government schemes in electoral campaigns and communication strategies via Twitter. In their article, Roy et al., (2022) shows the pivotal role of social media in successful health campaigns by the government using tailored social media messages. Study of Agrawal et al., (2021) indicates that social media played a pivotal role in disseminating information related to hygiene, government, and entertainment as compared to official bulletins. Vaghela et al., (2022) studied the utilization of Twitter by Indian MPs for purposes of political outreach and networking, with implicit yet influential caste dynamics shaping the networks of politicians on Twitter. In their article, Verma et al., (2017) made recommendations to enhance citizen engagement through these digital channels.

SOCIAL MEDIA MODELS FOR GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION
In their research Hussin et al., (2024) present a comprehensive theoretical framework where they elucidate the integrative model delineates utilization of platforms, the nature of content, and the quality of services provided are key predictors of citizen engagement on these platforms. Figure 4 shows the major social media models used by the various authors.

Figure 4: Major social media models proposed by the authors from 2010 – 2024
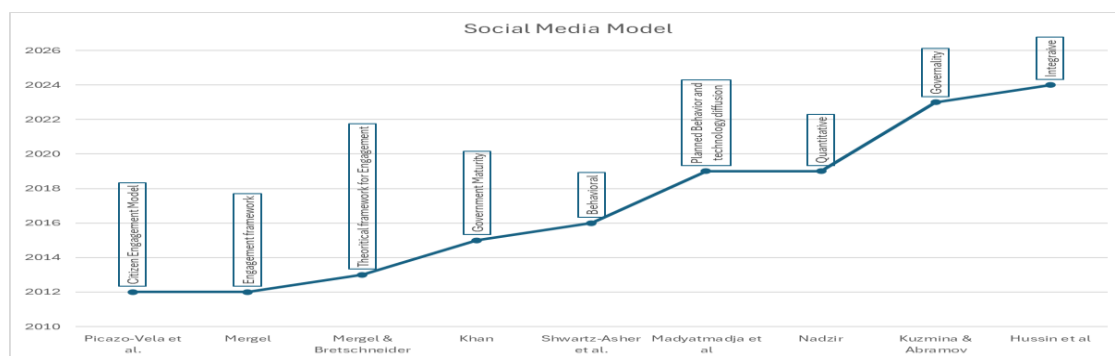
Source: Author's computation

Kuzmina & Abramov, (2023) proposed the communication framework pertaining to the concept of "governability" within the realm of digital public management. The study examines the pivotal role of social actors in communication processes aimed at facilitating public management to address crucial societal issues such as life support, social significance, and security.

The research by Madyatmadja et al., (2019) in Indonesia proposed a model that draws upon the Theory of Planned Behavior and technology diffusion theories, encompassing factors such as navigation, accessibility, security, design, and innovativeness.

Shwartz-Asher et al., (2016) The authors present a model of social media user behavior which delineates distinct user categories, namely light, heavy, and automated users.

Nadzir, (2019) studied utilization of the Malaysian e-government Facebook page, employing quantitative content analysis on page posts and public comments to glean initial insights regarding social media utilization for fostering public engagement strategies.

Khan, (2015) and (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013) proposed models encompass the open government maturity model, social media utilization model, adoption process for social media, and social media-based engagement model.

Picazo-Vela et al., (2012) have introduced three distinct models. The first model, 'Social Media-Based Citizen Engagement Model', Second, 'The Social Media-Based Data Sharing Model' and lastly, the 'Social Media-Based Real-Time Collaborative Government Model' underscores the use of social media in e-government to enhance real-time communication between governments and citizens.

Mergel (2012) put forward a conceptual framework comprising five distinct levels, (1) Dissemination of government information through official websites (2) Data transparency (3) Open participation (4) Open Collaboration (5) Ubiquitous Engagement.

Mergel & Bretschneider, (2013) presented a theoretical framework that is underpinned by a series of identified factors that contribute to successful communication, namely: transparency, participation, collaboration, comfort, and nature of topics posted.

UN, (2018) introduced a framework where the primary missions outlined are transparency, participation, and collaboration.

RESEARCH GAPS
This literature review shows some prominent research gaps which are mentioned below:
- The existing body of research on government communication through social media remains largely limited.
- Most studies primarily concentrate on specific application areas, with communication being only tangentially addressed.
- Past literature often indicates that the use of social media by governments offers various advantages for the government and the public both. Nonetheless, leveraging these benefits is accompanied by various challenges that have not been adequately tackled.
- There is a lack of appropriate metrics to gauge the government's impact on social media; as a result, the success and effectiveness of government communication on social media has sparked controversy.

DISCUSSION
Traditional media like newspapers, radio and television has historically been a primary source of information dissemination for any government, however, in the contemporary landscape, the advent of digital information technologies has highlighted, various shortcomings like limited interactivity and engagement, no scope for real-time feedback; challenges like accurate information on a timely basis, lack of agility and responsiveness may affect public understanding and response to emergencies. These limitations can result in information silos and

trigger governments for technology-driven social media platforms that are easily accessible, interact with real-time feedback to enable rapid dissemination of information.

Unlike traditional media social media fosters two-way interactions, enabling direct engagement between authorities, stakeholders, and the public. This enhanced interactivity on social media applications can promote social inclusion by engaging a broader spectrum of participants who may not participate through traditional means. The benefits of social media in facilitating public health responses, promoting civic engagement, and enhancing crisis communication underscore its transformative potential in modern communication landscapes.

Many governments worldwide embrace social media seeing its tremendous potential in citizen engagement, promoting transparency, and facilitating effective communication strategies. For instance, the Italian government very effectively utilizes social media crisis communication, similarly, various governments, such as the Romanian public administration and Indian cabinet ministers, on social media platforms to connect with citizens, promote transparency, and share information. Various studies collectively underscore the significance of social media in the Government of India, showcasing its role in citizen engagement, crisis communication, public policy dissemination, and e-Governance practices.

The social media communication models proposed by various authors may offers comprehensive strategies, challenges, and best practices employed by governments worldwide in leveraging social media for
- Engagement: Citizens may express their opinions, emotions, behaviors and interactions.
- Data Sharing: Citizens may share their own data and opinions.
- Near Real-Time collaboration: Social-media must enhance government-to-citizen interaction on a near real-time basis specifically in crisis time.

Overall, these studies collectively underscore the importance of developing robust social media models for governments to optimize communication, enhance citizen participation, and foster transparency in governance practices. By adopting effective social media frameworks, governments can improve their relationships with citizens, improve service delivery, and promote inclusive decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION
The primary objective of the current paper was to investigate the existing knowledge base within the realm of social media to communicate government schemes. The literature review conducted revealed a scarcity of literature that predominantly focuses on broader issues. The impact of social media on government communication and citizen browsing behaviour was extensively explored, yet the determinants and distinctiveness of such communication remain unexplored. The utilization of social media not only for government communication but also for election campaigns has notably surged post its widespread adoption in India have recently embraced engaging with the public outside the election period.

The strategic utilization and systematic deployment of social media possess the potential to shape public opinion, fostering both consensus and dissent. This dynamic foster virtual democratic forums where governmental bodies and authorities are compelled to take action, with political parties and figures becoming more receptive to public feedback. The essence of government communication in social media encompasses articulating one's political beliefs and scrutinizing adversaries through careful observation and analysis. The ruling government leverages social media to disseminate its developmental agenda to the public, while opposition factions strive to pinpoint vulnerabilities. Hence, a virtual democracy emerges within social media platforms.

A discernible trend of convergence and mutual exclusivity between traditional mainstream media and social media is increasingly apparent. There is a pressing need for more introspective and empirically driven research to comprehend the strategies employed by political entities in navigating change and transcending communication barriers between the realms of political and non-political, public and private, and mass and niche audiences.

Practical Implications of the Research: This study will prove beneficial not only to scholars and professionals in mass communication, journalism, political science, social workers and NGOs but also to those in marketing and business sectors, as it underscores the implications of government communication as a marketing instrument.

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