

Role and Responsibility of Social Media during Disasters in Chennai

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Abstract:

The world has been facing a variety of natural disasters since the beginning of the world. Generally a disaster may be called as cyclone, tsunami, flood, storm etc. Similarly, dengue, malaria and other virus or bacterial infections that spread to the people also contribute to the elements of natural disasters. The role of media in times of these disasters is very important. In recent times the media especially social media, has seen a lot of technological advancements. The social media has become a very essential tool in reaching out the mass audience and is much easier than getting a message through the media. The website Talk walker points out that the number of social media users in India alone is 161 million.

Through this field survey research, the researcher has shed some light on the popularity of social media for people living in cities like Chennai during disaster times. The researcher selected the participants from the following parts of Chennai: Besant Nagar, West Tambaram, Anna Nagar and Velachery A total of 350 Respondents participated in this survey. In this field survey, three types of questions have been asked by the researcher. These questions were asked to the respondents based on their experience and knowledge in the role of social media during the times of disaster. The study was conducted during the time period from 20November 2020 to 30 November 2020.

Key words: *Social Media, Role of Social Media, Disasters, Responsibility of Social Media, Chennai disaster.*

Introduction:

The researcher has explained in a ground survey on the popularity of social media for people living in cities like Chennai during disasters. Every time a city is hit with any kind of disaster the role of social media has always been important. For example, in the case of Chennai floods in 2015, the main

stream media did not do any notable work. But the Social media did a great job in sharing the news of places that need help in saving people from flood and promoted the posts of social activists who provided food for those who were starving by pitching in the funds that they could donate. In Chennai, Social media which has become a dynamic need of the people consistently supported in alerting the news about the spread of Dengue so as to raise awareness and its prevention. Social media has been spreading messages the same way all over the world. It is a healthy Thing, but in parallel the spread of fake news by a significant amount of users is spoiling the quality, vision and mission of social media.

When a post containing fake or controversial statements by an individual is shared by a few people who use social media, the message becomes frequently shared without being thoroughly examined or fact-checked. For example, news about the death a prominent cinema celebrity hailing from Chennai who was actually in good health was posted on social media went instantly viral. This type of fake news reduces the quality of social media and its value tends to drop eventually. The motive of the study is to find the role and responsibility of social media in the current pandemic situation. The aim of the study is also to uncover the people's opinion on the transparency of social media.

Literature Review:

Joseph, Akhil, Pradeep Kumar and Mohan, in their study conducted in 2018, have pointed out the huge contribution made by social media during the time of disasters. Although such studies have been done before, the subjects they have covered and the results produced have been different. In this research, the researcher has narrowed down the subject to only social media, which is widely followed by urban people like: Whats-app, Face book, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Google and Snap chat. Investigations of social media in misfortunes have been directed as a component of an overall propensity to analyze the working of social association by methods for the Internet and cell phones (Krimsky 2007) There is a wide differentiation between investigations of the specialized and social viewpoints of social media. (Mayank Yadav & Zillur Rahman-2015) focused in their study about role of that social media and how can be play during the time of natural disasters. (A Mukkamala, R Beck - 2018) they have focused on identifying types of information being shared among users during times of disasters. (M Kaigo - Keio Communication Review, 2012) This study also investigated how social capital may have been prominently formed through this interaction with Twitter during the disaster in Tsukuba. The making of new stages and calculations describes the former (Cheong and Lee 2010; White and Plotnik 2010), while investigations of the sorts of usage and

messages sent identify with the last mentioned (Hugh and Palen2009; Lindsay 2011). The technical side incorporates by investigations of the rate and methodology of dispersion of messages (Song and Yan 2012). These studies are evasive about the balance between the advantages and disadvantage of social media.see below. But they are agreed in distinguishing the uses and which social media is amended.

Advantages of Social Media:

Helps in sharing any news to a wider audience.

Promotes events

Initiates group conversations.

Gets career related information.

Entertainment

International Communication

The Disadvantages of Social Media:

Information theft

Illegal uploads of information

Spread of misinformation and disinformation

Cultural disorder and disorientation

Objective of the study:

1. To find out the social media that is mostly followed by the urban people.
2. To analyse the role of social media during the times of disaster.
3. To understand the social media that gained more trust during the times of the disasters.

Research methodology:

The research methodology used in this paper is field survey. The survey was conducted among a total of 350 people from four parts of Chennai and three types of questions were asked to the participants. From the responses collected, the results pointed out that 65% of the social media followers frequently use social media and 35% of the respondents use only two or four times per day. Respondents were able to choose their answer easily with the help of four questions (**Close Ended**

Questions) asked by researcher. The researcher conducted a live field survey before compiling these questions and answers. All the respondents co-operated well and the details of the participants are as follows: 89 respondents from Besant Nagar, 94 respondents from West Tambaram, 79 respondents from Anna Nagar and 88 respondents from Velachery.

Result and Findings:

The aim of this study is to find the social media that works efficiently and understands its role during the disasters. The results derived from the respondents that are mentioned in tables and charts below show the social media that is most followed by urban dwellers from places like Chennai and the social media that has truly gained popularity among the People.

The researcher compiled the question and answer for this study:

1. Which social media is the most followed by the urban population?
2. What kinds of news were shared by social media during the disaster?
3. Which social media gained more trust among the people during disasters?

Result and Findings:

1. Which social media is the most followed by the urban population?

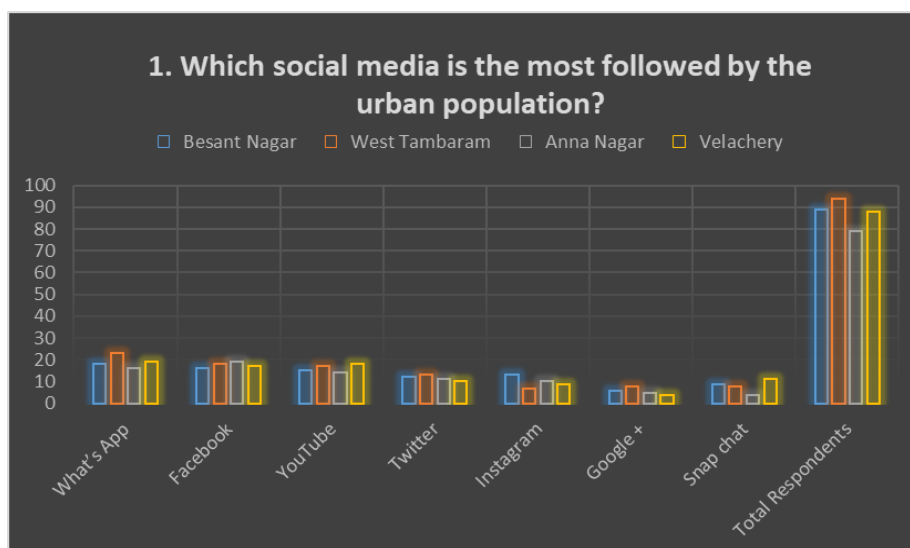
The result in Table 1 shows that Whats App is the most used social media among the respondents. From the Table-1 and Graph 1 average number of users from given social media applications are: Whats App- 22%, Face book - 20%, YouTube - 18% and Google - + 6%.

(Table-1)

Social Media	Besant Nagar	West Tambaram	Anna Nagar	Velachery
What's App	18	23	16	19
Facebook	16	18	19	17
YouTube	15	17	14	18
Twitter	12	13	11	10
Instagram	13	7	10	9
Google +	6	8	5	4

Snap chat	9	8	4	11
Total Respondents	89	94	79	88

Chart-1



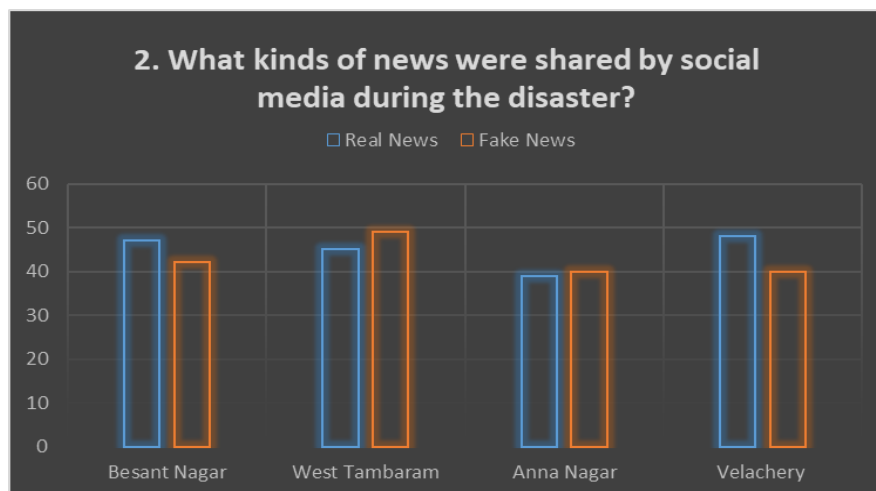
2. What kinds of news were shared by social media during the disaster?

- Real News
- Fake News

From Table-2, 51% of the respondents say that the Real News are being spread by social media during the disasters while 49% of respondents answered that fake News are shared via social media during the disasters. Comparing the two results, only an average of 50% respondents expresses their reliability on social media. (Table-2)

News Quality	Besant Nagar	West Tambaram	Anna Nagar	Velachery
Real News	47	45	39	48
Fake News	42	49	40	40

Chart-2



3. Which social media gained more trust among the people during disasters?

For this third question, people gave their honest opinion. Table -3 shows that 24% of respondents selected that twitter has gained more trust that other social media. So researcher has concluded that the twitter has been doing great job for the society. 20% of respondent have chose Facebook as the second most trusted social media while third and fourth place were taken by YouTube 19% and Whatsapp14% respectively. Other social media outlets such as Instagram, Google +, and Snap chat each rank between 6% and 8%. The results given here are based out of Chennai only and they might vary depending on the place and period.

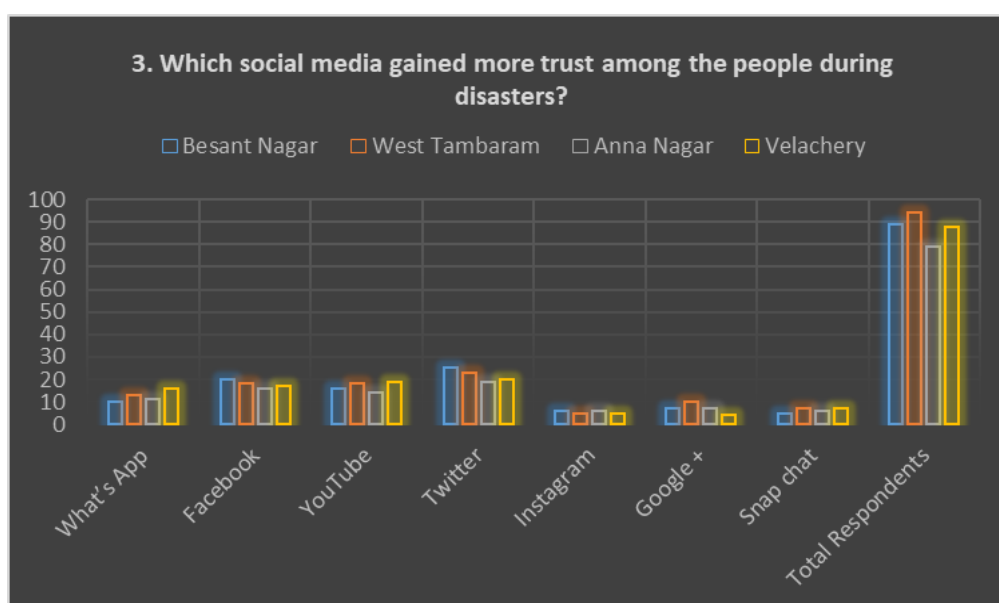
The Researcher affirms that this is not a competition among the social media. But the people from Chennai believe that only a few social Media are trustworthy during the disasters. Relatively, Researcher also believes that no social Media Company is responsible for sharing bad news by a random anonymous user.

(Table-03)

Social Media	Besant Nagar	West Tambaram	Anna Nagar	Velachery
What's App	10	13	11	16
Facebook	20	18	16	17
YouTube	16	18	14	19

Twitter	25	23	19	20
Instagram	6	5	6	5
Google +	7	10	7	4
Snap chat	5	7	6	7
Total	89 Respondents	94 Respondents	79 Respondents	88 Respondents

Chart-3



Conclusions:

Many people are being affected by natural disasters and some have been saved and located to a safer place through the news spread through social media. Many went missing and consequently, with the news shared to people via social media many volunteered and came forward to find them. A couple of social activists went to affected places, donated food and other basic necessities. Generally, any study is done to the benefit of people. As far as these studies are concerned, no social media is considered influential or non-influential, and the researcher has no intention of criticizing any social media through this study. Moreover social media images are spoiled when wrong message are being shared by some people. Thus Social media cannot be responsible in any way by the unreliable messages of a few people and it does not reduce the quality of social media.

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