

Crowdsourcing, Celebrities participation and User-Generated Content: Exploring Effectiveness of Social Media Challenge #SafeHands in India

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ABSTRACT: The outbreak of COVID-19 has put the world into a fix, causing uncertainties in all spheres of human life. People worldwide are in the grip of anxieties and insecurities amidst a lack of credible information. As the second wave hits many countries, India is reporting fourth highest number of deaths in the world; governmental organisations and non-profits are racing against time to curb this viral disease. The voluntary and non-profit organisations are increasingly utilising online media tools, techniques, and resources to inform, educate, and sensitise the masses amidst this global health crisis. In this context, the World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted social media challenges and User-Generated Content creation (UGC) strategies as one of the communication strategies to crowdsource, collaborate, engage, and co-create content with the users. The social media challenge #SafeHands Challenge conceptualised and initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasised washing hands, which was instantly accepted and responded to by global celebrities to create awareness and sensitise the masses to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus. The challenge led to User-Generated Content (UGC) creation, which made the challenge effective and viral across various social media platforms. This study explores and analyses the impact of the #SafeHands Challenge, initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which uses User-Generated Content (UGC) on social media platforms, popular amongst youths. The paper uses a survey method and quantitative data analysis to study the efficacy of social media challenges in content creation and information dissemination. The study aims to test the hypothesis – 'Social media challenges bring in desirable behavioural changes in youths with development communication messages' using the method of Statistical Correlation.

KEYWORDS: *Coronavirus, Pandemic, Social media, Crowdsourcing, User-Generated Content, Youth, India, Social media challenge*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

User-generated content (UGC) refers to the content co-created by amateur users, including different media and creative content (Bruns, 2016), which has become an effective strategy on social media to reach new audiences and build engagements.

Non-profit organisations are adopting it as a tool to disseminate and share information, create awareness, sensitise people, encourage participation, foster consensus, bring in attitudinal and behavioural changes, and facilitate action to contribute towards the larger good of the society. The World Health Organisation (WHO) took a timely decision to adopt the tool of UGC in their social media campaign to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus with the #SafeHands challenge. The campaign was spearheaded by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO, encouraging users to participate in the hands washing challenge and spread the message to maintain hand hygiene (Verma, 2020). The challenge was allied with several hashtags on social media like #SafeHands, #SafeHandsChallenge, and #HandHygiene to popularise the challenge across various social media platforms, to educate as well as sensitise the masses about the importance of regularly washing of hands during the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Coronavirus pandemic has created confusion and turmoil among people due to the bombardment of information that is causing attention fatigue, especially among youth. However, it is also imperative to educate the masses about the steps to be taken to counter the spread of the Coronavirus and encourage them to bring necessary behavioural changes. This study aims to examine the effect of social media challenges on the behaviour of youths in India. It would help understand the efficacy of the social media challenges as a strategy to encourage youth participation and bring behavioural changes in them about important developmental issues that could be of particular importance to the policymakers and not-for-profits.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to understand the efficacy of social media challenges as a communication strategy tool to educate and sensitise social media users about the key developmental issues and understand the effect it has on them. The paper seeks to validate the effectiveness of crowdsourcing to come up with innovative and formidable solutions to problems faced by society, especially during a time of a disaster or crisis.

1.4. World Health Organisation (WHO): Benefactor of the Vulnerable

The World Health Organisation (WHO), a specialised agency for global public health of the United Nations (UN), proactively responded to the need of the hour created by the pandemic. It collaborated with the World Food Program and started the UN COVID-19 Supply Task Force in 2020 to provide for the medical supply and food shortages in many countries. Moreover, initiatives like “Solidarity Trial,” “OpenWHO platform,” and others were launched to develop, produce and provide equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and diagnostics by WHO in collaboration with different partners (Kuznetsova, 2020).

The specialised agency of the UN actively responded to the issues and concerns that stemmed from Coronavirus. WHO indulged in advocacy during Coronavirus ranging from addressing human rights issues and stigma associated with COVID-19,

highlighting risks of domestic violence against women and children, and making recommendations on the measures to be taken by authorities to prevent or mitigate it (World Health Organisation, n.d.).

Campaigns like ‘We Are Family,’ ‘#TogetherAtHome,’ ‘#HealthyAtHome,’ ‘Building a fairer, healthier world,’ etc. was initiated by the WHO during the pandemic to raise awareness among the masses about COVID-19 encouraging them to be healthy and safe while maintaining the prescribed protocols. The ‘We Are Family’ campaign called for solidarity among people to mitigate Coronavirus and other health challenges faced due to the pandemic. ‘#TogetherAtHome’ was a solidarity session that offered performances by global celebrities on social media for the people and ‘#HealthyAtHome’ encouraged people to take good care of their mental health and physical health during the pandemic and promoted ways to do so. Whereas ‘Building a fairer, healthier world’ highlighted the importance of getting equal health services and benefits across all sections to lead a healthy life. The campaign aimed at achieving equality in accessing health services across the world (World Health Organisation, 2020; First Post, 2021). The World Health Organisation, via its online campaigns, sensitised the masses about COVID-19, helping to educate people and mitigate its spread.

1.5. User-generated content, Celebrity participation, and Social media challenges during lockdown

COVID-19 led to the creation of a disinfodemic among the general public wherein people felt that they could not be infected. However, information through credible and authentic sources helped in countering this perception. One of the sources that influenced the public was the celebrities. They used social media platforms to report being infected by the virus, encouraging the public to maintain physical distancing and follow prescribed protocols (Indian Express, 2021). Celebrities across the world promoted health awareness campaigns by non-profit organisations by sharing information and busting myths and stigmas associated with COVID-19 through social media platforms (Mututwa & Matsilele, 2020).

One such campaign that was popularised and made viral by celebrities and influencers was the #SafeHands challenge, initiated by the World Health Organisation to promote “regular, safe and effective hand hygiene.” The challenge advised the users to wash their hands for at least 40 seconds to contain the spread of Coronavirus and encouraged the users to take up the challenge on social media to bring awareness and changed behaviour amidst the pandemic. Many celebrities also shared the ‘right way’ of washing hands. Since the process was significant and effective, hence important that people adopt the practice. The challenge became viral as it was used as a TikTok hashtag, around half a billion times in only two days (Brown, 2020). Famous personalities like Selena Gomez, Olivia Wilde, Mariah Carey, Deepika Padukone, Anushka Sharma, and Sachin Tendulkar were witnessed taking up the challenge, encouraging users to take up the practice of washing hands regularly and spreading the word about the same (Harris, 2020; Times of India, 2020). #SafeHands challenge as a User-generated content (UGC) became viral on social media platforms and impacted masses to initiate change during the lockdown in 2020 (Goldstein, 2020).

2. Research Methodology

The study uses a survey method and quantitative data analysis to estimate the efficacy of the social media challenges in communicating about development communication messages, in general, and Coronavirus, particularly, as well as to understand the impact it brings on the behaviour of the users exposed to it. The study is conducted amongst Indian youths within the age group of 15-29, using a questionnaire circulated online via various social media platforms to understand social media challenges as an effective online communication strategy. Quantitative data analysis is used to measure the respondents' responses statistically using the standard survey method, selected to collect data to understand the youths' perspective in India when exposed to social media challenges. The study tests the research hypothesis with statistical correlation to prove the correlation between the variables - reminders to wash hands regularly by social media challenge and behavioural change of hand wash.

2.1. Research Hypothesis

H1. 'Social media challenges bring in desirable behavioural changes in youths with development communication messages'

3. Literature Review

3.1. Non-profit organisation's responses to Coronavirus

The non-profit organizations play an essential role in responding to the needs that surface amidst a crisis or a disaster as they, along with public organisations and civic participation, help those affected by disasters. Such an association is quite beneficial and effective when put into practice in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic (Kapucu, 2007). **COVID-19 and Human Development Report by UNDP (2020)** state that the pandemic has evolved from a health disaster to a socio-economic crisis, which has had a hard-hitting impact on human activities – especially the vulnerable groups' financial, trade, and migration, and remittances channels. Nevertheless, the not-for-profit organisations are adopting strategies and solutions to respond to COVID-19 and its effects.

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), with its close association with the local governments, had undertaken various initiatives like conducting awareness campaigns, distribution of hygiene, safety, and food kits. Aakanksha Khajuria (2020) highlights how IRCS has been running shelter homes, providing door-to-door delivery of medicines to people in dire need. The Society also started Family News Service (FNS), which helped people stranded in different cities due to the lockdown to establish communication with their families. 89 Red Cross Blood Banks were also led, which collected 1080 units of blood from 16th to 30th September 2020, which encouraged and motivated people to donate blood while adhering to the norms of social distancing (Indian Red Cross Society, 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic Situation Report by UNICEF India (2020) gives a situational overview of the repercussions caused by Coronavirus, affecting primarily children and

their wellbeing, and how UNICEF has been contributing to reaching out to the beneficiaries. In India, 660 million children and their families were sensitised with accurate information by UNICEF regarding ways to contain the spread of Coronavirus, with meaningful participation. UNICEF launched various educational initiatives for about 44.4 million children to facilitate the learning process despite the pandemic. Additionally, it provided children and their caregivers with psychosocial support, essential healthcare, and training in UNICEF-supported facilities.

Oxfam India (2021) reached out to 16 states in India during the lockdown with their Project PSP – “Protect. Secure. Preserve”. Their Project Pathik was highly appreciated for its effort of contributing food and hygiene kits to 4665 migrant workers through vans, equipped with first-aid kits. Handwashing stations were also set up at quarantine centres as a part of their initiative. Oxfam India, with the Government of Jharkhand, signed a MoU to help track and support the stranded migrants and, for its various efforts, received letters of appreciation from various State Governments of India.

On the other hand, The World Report by Human Rights Watch (2021) criticised the Indian government for its response to COVID-19. The report noted the compromise of press freedom with the arrest and assault of journalists during COVID-19. The country experienced the most significant number of Internet shutdowns which hurt and slowed down the medical responses to Coronavirus. The hate crimes particularly hit the marginalised communities, including the Muslims and Dalits, leading to loss of livelihood and necessities of the groups.

Social Response to COVID-19 Report by Deloitte (2020) has developed a blueprint to recovery through development during Coronavirus, highlighting initiatives and strategies that the non-profits could undertake. Some of it includes leveraging existing networks, bringing innovations, revising current projects’ milestones, and delving into pooled funding. Additionally, The World Economic Forum (2020) identifies solutions like setting up a COVID-19 response investment vehicle, Liquidity fund, and formulation of a Risk Framework Mechanism that non-profit organisations could adopt to raise funds during the global health crisis.

3.2. Crowdsourcing model: Tool to elicit newer solutions?

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the non-profit organisations adopted various methods and strategies to facilitate communication with the key stakeholders, develop solutions and raise funds. One of the significant ways to create newer solutions and strategies was User-generated content (UGC) creation, including crowdsourcing initiatives. User-generated content (UGC) is media content that amateur users create, invited by organisations to participate in online media usage (Agarwal, 2020).

Crowdsourcing is a strategic method to gather and assess the efforts of the online crowd to get solutions to the problems (Saxton et al., 2013). It is a model whereby the public and experts identify and develop solutions during a crisis or a disaster (Vermicelli, 2020). Gautam Kumar Ghosh (2020) recommends that newer, developed technologies legitimately gather information from the crowd could be well-utilised to fill in information gaps in health data that could be used in the context of COVID-19 to

mitigate it. Social media platforms can play a vital role in getting integrated into crowdsourcing initiatives to reach out to the people and achieve goals faster and effectively.

3.3 Crowdsourcing content and Non-profit's Social Media Campaigns

Crowdsourcing initiatives result in collaborative solutions, which is viewed as an essential strategy during the Coronavirus in its fight against it. Silvia Vermicelli et al. (2020) examine various crowdsourcing initiatives during COVID-19 and find it an effective tool to respond to counter Coronavirus, as it is a fast, affordable and original way of handling the health and economic challenges developed by the crisis. The initiatives like Crowdfight COVID-19, InnoCentive, COVID Near You, and Covent-19 Challenge garnered many participants and solutions, which were made readily available to the stakeholders to put into practice and made crowdsourcing a fruitful approach to provide productive solutions. The not-for-profit organisations are increasingly using social media platforms to achieve their set objectives, including raising funds for social causes and creating a pool of donors.

Katherine Milde and Robert M. Yawson (2017) point out how social media campaigns like The Ice Bucket Challenge and Giving Tuesday have helped raise funds and awareness for the cause and the non-profit organisation. In 2014, the ALS Association initiated the Ice Bucket Challenge, which challenged the users, including celebrities and other well-known figures, to dump an ice bucket full of water and post about the same on Facebook. The challenge was closely associated with contributing to fight ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The viral social media challenge raised \$115 million and sensitised people about the condition through its website and social media platforms (Munk, 2014). On the other hand, Giving Tuesday was initiated as a unique global day by the non-profits to engage in philanthropy. The movement was popularised on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter with the hashtag #GivingTuesday which increased awareness about the campaign and organisation and attracted new donors (Held, 2014).

Sarah Cavill (2020) provides examples of how some of the not-profits successfully facilitated their digital campaigns during the Coronavirus pandemic. World Central Kitchen caters to the food crises of local communities since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The organisation tied up with other non-profits during COVID-19 and provided fresh meals to the disadvantaged communities. Their social media campaign - #ChefsForAmerica went viral due to its active presence on social media and informative websites, resulting in them getting new donors for their initiative. Similarly, another non-profit, Truth Initiative, which aims at stopping the use of tobacco among adolescents and youth, launched the 'This is Quitting' campaign. This social media campaign stressed the risks involved with smoking during Coronavirus. The campaign went viral with its social media outreach, sending of the e-newsletter to the subscribers every week, and community involvement drives to make donations to the initiative. Engagement and activities on social media became particularly important during the Coronavirus pandemic for the not-for-profit organisation to disseminate information to the key stakeholders and the general public. Basch et al. (2020) explore that social media, particularly YouTube, is used as a source

of information. Thus, it could be used to contain the spread of the Coronavirus and disseminate credible information. Young people actively use these platforms to promote public health and volunteering (United Nations, 2020).

Hence, the literature review examines the role of non-profits during Coronavirus and its usage of crowdsourcing and social media. This research will focus on the role of social media challenges as a creative tool of disseminating information among youth about developmental issues and their impact on their behaviour in the context of COVID-19.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

The study reveals that most of the respondents got to know about the #SafeHands challenge through Instagram, reporting to be most active on Instagram (69%) among Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, followed by Facebook (45%) and Twitter (73%). The research finds that 45% of the respondents never participated in a social media challenge while only 31% participated, particularly in the #SafeHands challenge. Though most of the respondents have not participated in any social media challenges and the #SafeHands Challenge, the study finds that they are well-aware of the challenge and were influenced by it. Furthermore, 39% of the respondents agree, and 13% strongly agree that the participation of celebrities in the social media challenges encourages them to participate in it and follow the trend on social media platforms.

The study discloses that social media challenges are a creative way of educating about important developmental issues like health, and education. It highlights that most of the respondents, that is, 55%, agree that such challenges on social media help educate. Whereas 21% of the sample strongly agrees with the statement. Moreover, 55% of the respondents agreed that the #SafeHands challenge educated them about the Coronavirus.

The research shows that the case is such that both ways – either with or without participation – respondents believe that these social media challenges help educate and sensitize people about critical developmental issues, including the containment and the spread of the novel Coronavirus. According to the study, the #SafeHands challenge had a behavioural impact on the users exposed to the challenge. 50% of the respondents disclosed that they agree that the #SafeHands challenge reminded them to wash their hands during the Coronavirus pandemic regularly. Whereas 11% of them strongly agreed with the statement. Moreover, they revealed that the challenge particularly brought in behavioural changes in them, leading them to wash their hands regularly during the global health crisis caused by COVID-19. The sense of participation, awareness, and behavioural changes is increased in social media challenges when celebrities are associated with it. It encourages them to participate and follow the trend, the respondents revealed.

The study using the method of statistical correlation also finds out that there is a positive correlation of 0.67 between the variables - reminder to wash hands by social media challenge and washing of hands. The study indicates that the more the youth on

social media are reminded to wash hands by the social media challenge, the higher are their chances of washing hands regularly. As the former increases, the latter also increases with it (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistical correlation between reminder and behavioural change

	<i>Remind</i>	<i>Behavioral change</i>
Remind	1	0.6722843
Behavioral change	0.6722843	1

The graphical representation of the positive correlation between the variables could be seen in Graph 1, where the increase in the X-axis leads to a rise in the Y-axis. The graph indicates a significant correlation between – reminder to wash hands and actual washing of hands.

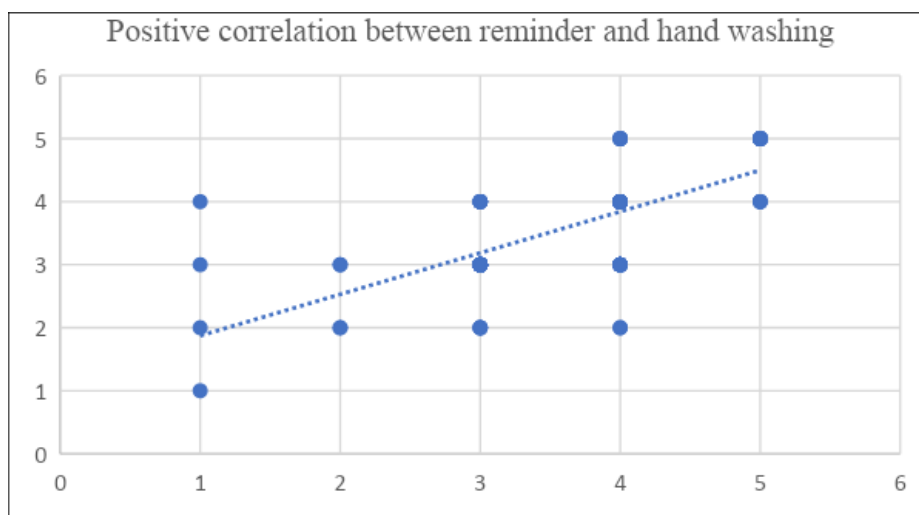


Figure 1. Reminder to wash hands brings behavioural change, that is, washing of hands

Hence, analysing and evaluating the responses of the survey conducted and the testing of the statistical correlation between the variables reveals that reminder received by the #SafeHands challenge resulted in bringing about behavioural change in the youth, that is, washing of hands. Hence, proving the hypothesis of this study - 'Social media challenges brings in desirable behavioural changes in youths with development communication messages.'

6. Conclusion

Social media challenges are an effective online strategy to communicate, spread information, awareness, and bring behavioural changes to the youth. It is a participatory and creative channel of communication that is low in cost and fast to communicate the message to the targeted audience. According to the study, the involvement of celebrities

in such challenges increases participation among users, which makes the users feel a part of a more significant cause and helps build social solidarity among them. The study of the #SafeHands challenge revealed the potential such challenges have, which, when used by marketers, non-profits, or policymakers, could be beneficial to spread awareness about developmental issues. However, the study had some limitations – Firstly, the sample size consisted of only 100 respondents, which does not give a more holistic picture of the effectiveness of the #SafeHands challenge. Secondly, the survey method might not be adequate to gauge the impact such social media challenges bring on the behaviour of the users. An in-depth interview or focus group study would have given a more detailed insight. Future research could be conducted to understand if such social media challenges become viral and get participation from celebrities only when it is sponsored by giant agencies like the World Health Organisation. A comparative study could be carried out between the large-scale NGOs' campaigns and the small-scaled ones to gauge the effectiveness and virality of their social media campaigns on similar issues. Nonetheless, this study brings a new perspective in the field of new media research. It proves social media challenges to be an effective online strategy to educate and bring behavioural change.

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