

“Whether its Jallikattu protest after 7 days or Sterlite protest after 99 days...all were infiltrated by anti-socials and made a shame to people’s protest.”

Overview

The abrupt closure of Sterlite Copper’s Thoothukudi plant was the result of external forces (i.e., politicians, NGOs, and social media influencers) who exacerbated people’s anxieties to increase [Social Risk](#) and achieve their personal objectives. The Tamil Nadu Government’s order to close the plant without addressing citizens and surrounding communities’ underlying grievances, along with Sterlite Copper’s lack of coordinated communication and engagement strategies, present opportunities to introduce immediate and long-term solutions to resolve the conflict and address the people of Thoothukudi’s concerns.

Findings: Topic Modeling

Tamil and English social media discussions across various online social media platforms revealed three (3) trending topics:

- Influence of so-called “anti-social” elements:
 - 67% of trending discussions concern three groups: [Maoists](#) from Chattisgarh, foreign NGOs, and religious groups from the area
- Role of Tamil celebrities:
 - Popular Tamil celebrities use caste (e.g. Kamal Hassan and Rajinikanth) and religious (e.g. Vijay with Tamil Christianity) identities to selectively target people that identify with their individual beliefs
- Differences between English and Tamil news reporting
 - 71% of Tamil newspapers report using a “sensationalist” lens stoking people’s emotions against Sterlite Copper
 - 82% of English newspapers incorporate economic and societal consequences of the plant’s shutdown



India’s Deccan Chronicle English newspaper reporting role of external influencers



“Vijay is our brother, our hero!
(Thalapathy = “Emperor” in Tamil)

“Maoists were involved in Sterlite protests. Their posters and banners used in that protest were found in Chattisgarh.”

Findings: Sentiment Analysis

Reveals that 87% of Thoothukudi’s citizens express negative sentiment with matters related to how Sterlite, as well as Tamil Nadu Government, have not addressed their grievances:

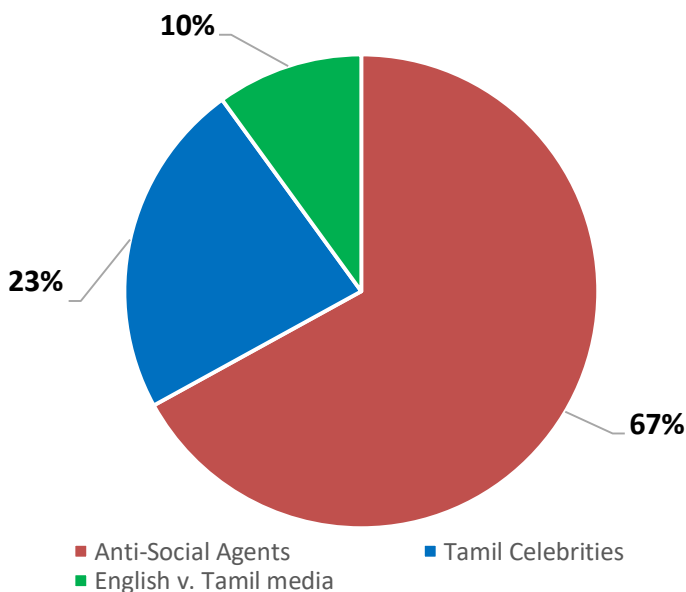
- Vedanta’s communication [strategy](#) has failed to alleviate people’s concerns
- Madras High Court’s [statement](#) on June 13 questioning Tamil Nadu Government’s closure orders illustrates the weakness in state leadership
- People of Thoothukudi are unable to find answers to the numerous [deaths](#) due to alleged environmental contamination and Tamil Nadu Government’s [firing](#) on innocent people during the protest

Findings: Social Media Saturation

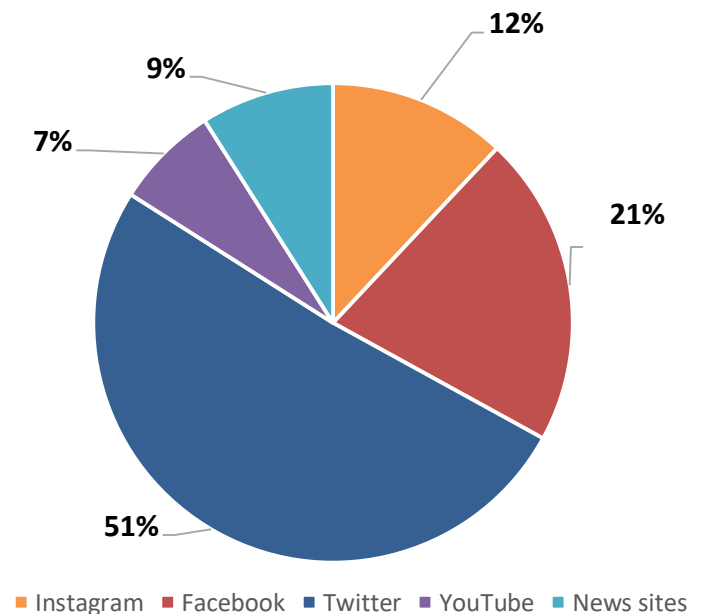
The majority of online discussions (51%) were found on Twitter with 89% of these tweets posted using mobile phones

- Twitter’s lean interface provides instant opportunities for users in Thoothukudi to create hashtags, share photos, and disseminate news articles
- Social media influencers, including fan clubs of Tamil celebrities engage the public more directly using Twitter

Trending Topics in Thoothukudi



Social Media Use Per Platform



“The #MadrasHighCourt on Wednesday expressed dissatisfaction over the recent Tamil Nadu Government Order for shutting down the Sterlite copper unit in Thoothukudi”

Recommendations

Conduct additional analysis (e.g., [Social Media Analysis](#) or [Social Risk Action Plan](#)) to:

- Design a comprehensive communication and engagement strategies that build trust and create transparency between key stakeholders (e.g., Thoothukudi citizens, Tamil Nadu government, Sterlite Copper and parent Vedanta, and the Indian Government)
 - Use social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) to disseminate targeted narratives that address key concerns (e.g., contamination due to copper and justice for deaths due to police firing)
 - Conduct topic and sentiment analysis of local communities using social media discussions in Tamil and English
 - Perform Social Network Analysis to identify key influencers (i.e., political, NGOs, and community influencers) who shape and influence public perceptions

Data Analytics

ENODO’s social media exploitation examined 25,784 Twitter posts, 6,789 Facebook posts, 869 news websites, 632 YouTube Videos and comments, 298 Google+ posts, 118 Instagram posts, and 78 blogs to conduct topic modeling and measure public sentiment.

