

Constructive Manoeuvring of the Interconnected World: Unraveling Utility of Crowdsourcing In Criminal Investigation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The practice of outsourcing tasks to a large group or community, typically through an open call on the internet or mass media, with the aim of harnessing collective intelligence, skill sets, and creativity to address a critical problem or achieve a specific goal, is known as ‘crowdsourcing.’ In criminal investigations, law enforcement agencies often employ this approach to gather information, tips, or leads from the public via social media platforms, online forums, or mobile applications. Crowdsourcing emerges as a potent tool for police investigations due to its capacity to swiftly reach a broad audience and uncover information that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Moreover, it fosters trust between law enforcement and the community, showcasing a collaborative effort to solve crimes. This chapter critically analyses the efficacy and inefficacy of employing crowdsourcing in erstwhile criminal investigations by drawing insights from prominent cases influenced by this method.

INTRODUCTION

In this evolving age of the Internet and other technologies, people with varying degrees of relationship work together to try to assist with or solve crimes. For instance, it’s very usual that the people residing in the closed societies or apartments share

information about theft, robberies, domestic violence & other current happenings or mis-happenings in their neighbourhood through their respective closed groups on social media or any application. In these situations, the crowd, which is occasionally perceived as a threat, transforms into a priceless resource that may support law enforcement agencies through collective information. Furthermore, it can be construed that the advancements in the technology, innovative devices and easy accessibility of the internet has resulted in augmenting the interconnectivity among the people leading to the production of collective intelligence (Williams, 2013). Thereby, the concepts like social computing, community intelligence, distributed human computation and citizen science were linked to the term crowdsourcing (Quinn and Bederson 2011). Hence the definition of the term ‘crowdsourcing’ has evolved over the period of time. According to Gonzalez Ladron (2012), “*Crowdsourcing can be defined as a type of participative online activity in which an individual or institution, a non-profit organization, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task*”. As a matter of fact, Crowdsourcing has been used for a variety of purposes, such as product development, market research, problem-solving, and content creation. Some examples of crowdsourcing include open-source software development, Wikipedia, citizen science projects, and crowdfunding platforms. In addition to this, crowdsourcing is increasingly utilised to report crimes and engage the general public in the investigation of potential criminal activities.

Due to its detrimental consequences on the wellbeing and quality of life on the citizens of the state, crime is considered to be a recurring problem in contemporary communities. According to Kadar et al. (2016), crime comes with a variety of psychological and emotional consequences that can affect how people interact with both their immediate environment and their fellow citizens. Moreover, a crime entails various indirect and financial cost which affect not just the person against whom the crime is committed but also to the society as a whole. In this regard and particularly evidencing the increase in the usage of mobile devices which provides the ability for rapid communication to the people, In particular, crowdsourcing has the power to dissuade criminal activity and thereby can lead to enhancing quality of life by encouraging creation of more cohesive and secure neighbourhoods and communities. Meanwhile, few scholars have explained how these linked individuals might come together to form a ‘*supermind*’ i.e., a group of people who behave in ways that appear intelligent (Malone, T. W. 2018). The concept of *supermind* demonstrates the rise of a new kind of crowd which precisely have the potential to transform from being a threat to becoming an active participant in the creation of a better community as they can be committed to preventing and solving crimes rather than committing them (Malone, T. W. 2018).

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