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How Social Listening Is Changing The Way Governments View Public Perception

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For governments today, presence on Facebook or Twitter is no longer a question of choice. Social media is empowering individuals and influencing policy processes. People can engage in direct dialogue with politicians, civic officials, and government agencies. Being a bipartite platform for communication, social media has emerged as the vehicle for 'collective action', leading to a technology-enabled transformation in government to citizen interface. Niche technologies like AI embedded into tools like '**social listening**' are making this two-way government-citizen experience more immersive.

Social media has brought a progressive shift in the way governments around the world communicate with citizens. India with 300 million+ social media users and a largely young demographic is a disruptor in digital government-citizen engagement. In the absence of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), it gets tough to monitor posts 'real-time' and map responses with alacrity. It isn't enough to monitor conversations or posts on social media, but there is a need to gauge the mood or sentiment. This is where 'social listening', a tool powered by AI, overcomes the pain points.

Social listening means tracking posts, mentions and conversations on your social media handle and mine the data to develop actionable insights. Social media monitoring looks at KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) like engagement rate and the number of mentions, whereas social listening looks beyond the numbers to consider the mood. Many government organisations are increasingly taking to social listening for online reputation management. The feedback from the public can be crucial in crafting and framing better schemes.

There is a world of difference between tracking social media feeds of citizens and understanding their mood. Social listening helps governments in three-dimensional engagement with citizens instead of robotically pushing their messages. To illustrate, the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT) uses social listening to find and follow conversations on social media to understand the type of content that the audiences wish to see on each channel.

The stream content can also be filtered to customise the results most relevant to a specific campaign or initiative. Sentiment analysis, through social listening, also enables DCT to identify negative conversations about Abu Dhabi and accordingly, **reshape the social media strategy**.

Using niche technology like **machine learning**, social listening enables 'real-time' social media response mining. **Blockchain technology** can be used on a large scale for identity verification of people or influencers posting on social media, confirm that the followers are real or fake and show only mentions or posts from verified human beings as opposed to robots. The future is calling, are we 'listening'?

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