Rumour monitoring and social listening using an AI tool, Talkwalker

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Abstract

Background: UNICEF and MoH utilized Talkwalker, an artificial intelligence tool, to help address infodemic during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic stimulated spread of misinformation at a time when facts are crucial and lifesaving. Some rumors are harmless, others create a significant public health risk and community conflict by stigmatizing protective practices. Social listening allows us to: engage with people, manage crisis, track anti-vaxxers, identify influencers and advocates.

Methods: Step 1: Monitor social media channels for keywords related to COVID-19 vaccines. Step 2: Analyze the information to strategize communication response. Social listening looks beyond the numbers to consider the mode behind the data helping us to understand how people feel about the topic.

Results: As the system automatically updates, it is important to focus in on key time points during vaccine rollout timeframe. On June 9, 2021, after national COVID-19 vaccination launch, there were a total of 118 reactions on government web pages managed out of Vanuatu including MoH; summarized sentiments are: 68% of the share of sentiments were neutral, 25% positive while 5% were negative. These data are monitored by the MoH team and are fed back for actioning including: strategically adjusting key messages, informing MoH Executive, draft concern and question response through FAQs, and talking points for the regular MoH media updates.

Discussion: The penetration of internet and particularly use of social media, using tools like Talkwalker are cost effective and time-efficient to support social listening and rumour monitoring. Talkwalker offers robust social listening features that analyzes blogs, forums, videos, news sites, review sites, and social networks all in one dashboard drawing from over 150 million data sources. By itself, it has limitations, however as part of a robust rumor management system it supports to enable an evidence-based and effective response by better understanding the misinformation and rumors circulating.