

# Management of Government Communication in the United Arab Emirates: A Review of Best Practices

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## Abstract

This paper reviews recent literature on the management of government communication in the United Arab Emirates. It examines the best practices and international benchmarks for government communication which comprises digital platforms, two-way communication and citizen engagement. It analyses key dimensions such as centralized coordination, multi-platform communication, citizen engagement through crowdsourcing, crisis risk communication, nation branding, and transparency. Further, the study compares the UAE practices with global standards and finds that there is a strong alignment between the two. The paper also outlines future directions for government communication in the UAE which focuses on increased usage of emerging technologies for analytics which can help the country enhance engagement and build professional capacity to sustain public trust and policy effectiveness.

**Keywords:** United Arab Emirates, Best practice, Digital government, Social media, Innovation, Artificial intelligence

## 1. Introduction

A key function of governance is constant exchange of information about policies, ideas, and decisions between the governor and the governed. Although it has always remained relevant, today government communication has emerged as a key managerial function in public administration especially in complex societies which are defined by rapid socio-economic

transformation, policy innovation, and multicultural populations. It is also indispensable in states where governance depends on public trust and coordinated action. (Howlett, 2009) defines government communication as an information-based policy tool through which governments seek to influence behaviour and give effect to policy goals. Consensus can be drawn in literature that for governments to achieve their policy goals, their communication must receive the same magnitude of importance as regulatory and economic instruments. Communication is therefore positioned as a strategic decision rather than a symbolic exercise.

Several definitions of government communication highlight the importance of transparency and stakeholder engagement (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Fissi et al., 2022; Keitany et al., 2025). Transparent communication ensures that the government explains the policy objectives and decision processes clearly rather than limiting communication to final announcements. Stakeholder engagement magnifies the effect of transparency as it enables two-way communication in which governments take note of public concerns and expert inputs. Government communication is essential because it contributes to institutional legitimacy, social cohesion, and crisis resilience (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021; Mizrahi et al., 2021), whereas poor communication can lead to erosion of public trust, widespread misinformation, and poor policy effectiveness (Ahmed et al., 2025).

In the United Arab Emirates (the UAE), public communication holds distinctive importance as its governance model emphasises performance, innovation, and long-term national vision which is achieved through active engagement with the citizens and global audiences. It is one of the key drivers of public trust and forms the basis of their national vision policies. Aligning with global standards, the UAE's communication strategies are structured and prioritise digital channels such as online platforms for stakeholder engagement whereas social media platforms are used to gather public inputs and feedback (Faisal, 2025; Radwan and Mousa, 2020). This paper reviews best practices in the management of government communication in the United Arab Emirates, with a specific focus on transparency, stakeholder engagement, and institutional coordination. It aims to review how the UAE government implements communication across public institutions and draws parallels with international practices so that scope for improvement can be identified and recommended.

## **2. Best practices for Government Communication in the UAE**

Existing literature identifies a wide range of best practices followed in the UAE to maintain communication with the public which reflects their emphasis on effectiveness, trust, and national cohesion. The most commonly identified government communication strategies followed by UAE public authorities include centralised coordination, digital platforms, citizen engagement mechanisms, crisis communication systems, nation-branding initiatives, and transparent practices. This section reviews these practices.

### **3. Centralized Coordination Across Institutions**

One of the most recurring best practices of government communication in the UAE is the maintenance of a strong institutional coordination for government messaging. Communication by the UAE government is treated as a core function rather than an optional

PR activity. Empirical studies cite the example of the Covid-19 pandemic wherein the government publicly communicated consistently through digital platforms about public health updates and mandatory behavioural protocols to reduce any ambiguity. This was a strategic initiative planned and coordinated by multiple state agencies that followed clear and distinctive tasks to guide the public rather than ad hoc communication approaches (Radwan and Mousa, 2020). Such a well-coordinated campaign was executed on a national scale with the help of dedicated institutions called communication centers which help government entities follow common standards, maintain consistent messages, and align public communication with national priorities such as sustainable development and long-term vision plans (Ayish, 2021).

#### **4. Multi-platform Communication**

Another widely cited best practice of government communication in the UAE is its heavy reliance on digital channels such as social media as the primary platform for communication (Alenzi and Miskon, 2024; Shaher and Radwan, 2022; Siyam et al., 2020). Studies focusing on the UAE assert that social media helps the UAE government increase openness and publicity, understand public opinion, and improve the levels of transparency and engagement with the citizens (Al Hadeed et al., 2024; Darwish, 2017). Some of the advantages of social media applications for government communication include scalability and speed while enabling two-way interaction. Research on government social media use in the UAE further examine in measurable terms how specific features of official posts such as content type, tone, timing, and format influence citizen responses, though likes, shares, retweets, and comments. They conclude that government communication is not a one-way information delivery strategy; rather, it is an engagement mechanism which can be optimised on digital platforms where audience reactions provide feedback. They further assert that the key to maximising the reach of government communication using social media is to frame and package the messages strategically, such that government entities are able to monitor public attention, interaction, and responsiveness.

#### **5. Crowdsourcing for Citizen Engagement**

Studies examining government communication in the UAE describe crowdsourcing as another effective mechanism which garners large-scale citizen engagement (Abuzanjali and Bashir, 2024; Araz Taeihagh, 2025). In this approach, the government actively invites citizens to contribute ideas, opinions, and solutions through digital platforms, particularly social media. Their inputs are then used to make public decisions. Researchers describe this as a modern extension of traditional consultation practices, such as the majlis, which has been translated into online practices to allow them to tap into a wider audience (Mohammad Bin Rashid School of Government, 2015). A well-documented example is the UAE National Brainstorming Session. In this initiative, the government authorities first defined clear topics for discussion so as to discourage them from deviating from the specific policy or service issue. Then they invited participation from the citizens through social media platforms using hashtags and short submissions to further lower entry barriers. It was systematically planned through a series of activities such as initial approvals, planning, public launch, and

post-launch engagement analysis. This campaign is regarded as a shift from majlis to hashtag.

## **6. Crisis Risk Communication**

Studies have also described crisis communication as a government communication strategy followed seamlessly in the UAE. Literature explains crisis communication as the government's ability to explain the crisis clearly to the public, reduce confusion, and establish and convey clear behavioural guidelines in times of uncertainty, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, research examined the government's communication strategies followed during its peak, with emphasis on three core elements: reducing public uncertainty by providing frequent updates, ensuring that the information was released at regular intervals, and using official digital platforms (government websites, verified social media accounts, and press briefings) to ensure that information came from trusted sources. Not only did it help establish clear protocols, but it also helped them from spreading misinformation. A number of studies conducted in subsequent years followed the UAE government's communication strategy and describe it as institutionally coordinated, centrally managed, and digitally delivered, rather than reactive (Al Hadeed et al., 2024; Radwan and Mousa, 2020; Shaher and Radwan, 2022).

## **7. Nation Branding and Soft-power Communication**

Another major best practice discussed in literature on international communication in the UAE is strategic nation branding and soft-power communication. In this, government communication is embedded within the national scale projects such as Vision 2030, national plans, etc., and international reputation management initiatives such as commitment to sustainable development goals. These studies assert that branding initiatives function not only as external communication but also as part of internal nation-building narratives. Examples include communicating modernity/tradition dualisms. Further, studies examine UAE government communication through the lens of reputation management and branding, i.e. how international audiences including tourists, investors, as well as international residents perceive the UAE (Anholt, 2007; Govers, 2012). This is examined through communication that has taken place on media and state events. In explaining this strategy as a soft power, studies explain that UAE government communication is not limited to announcements, but forms part of a broader communication ecosystem which focuses on global competitiveness (Allagui and Al-Najjar, 2018). On the other hand, soft power refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction rather than force. As a result, the literature perceives UAE government communication to link branding, diplomacy, culture, and economic positioning.

## **8. Transparency and Accountability**

Academic literature on digital government in the UAE explain that transparency and accountability are core elements in the government's overall public communication strategy and their scope extends beyond press briefings. The government publishes data directly through digital platforms so that citizens can access it for examination, referring to the practice as open-government information practices (Bertot et al., 2010; Saxena, 2017). These studies study the broader scope of GCC countries. Governments of these countries make key

information such as economic indicators, infrastructure, and social development progress publicly accessible so that their performance can be independently reviewed. In these studies, the UAE is seen as an active adopter of open data as a communication tool.

## **9. Comparison to Global Best Practices**

In the global literature, some of the best practices in government communication identified are clarity, consistency, coordination, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. International organisations such as the OECD, United Nations, and World Health Organization assert that government communication should be planned rather than fragmented. They also identify regular and consistent government communication through trusted official channels as an effective way to address uncertainty during crises and maximising citizen participation. These practices are followed consistently in the UAE, bringing it at par with international best practices. Moreover other similarities exist between UAE and leading countries such as the use of official digital platforms to engage the public. Social media platforms are used for communicating real-time updates, crises, and emergencies. For instance, (Radwan and Mousa, 2020) find that the UAE's communication protocol of frequent updates and consistent public-health directives through online mediums are consistent with WHO risk communication guidances which highlight that timely information and community engagement are paramount during emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic (World Health Organisation, 2025). Stakeholder engagement is also identified by the WHO as a crucial way to engage two-way communication with the public of a country rather than simply raising awareness. Since the UAE implements social media-based crowdsourcing events to engage the public, another international best practice is met.

## **10. Future Directions in Government Communication**

As technology continues to play a central role in government communication across the world, future government communication in the UAE is also expected to become more centered around data usage. Community participation is expected to increase as messages become more outcome-oriented. Further, the government is recommended to incorporate more use of analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to tailor messages to different types of audiences. Assessment of public response should be conducted in real time so that necessary corrective measures can be taken proactively. Two-way communication is also expected to become even more important where citizen feedback will actively shape up policy design. In addition to using the most recent communication and analytics technologies, the UAE government is advised to build institutional capacity further through training. Finally, the UAE government is recommended to continue embedding communication in its core national agenda and policies which enhance their transparency and build trust with the audience. This will help the UAE government maintain credibility and effectiveness as a collective institution in an increasingly complex environment.

## **11. Conclusion**

This study reviewed the management of government communication in the United Arab

Emirates through identified best practices and a comparison with of international best practices. The analysis shows that the UAE has developed a strong government communication system wherein centralisation and digital advancement are core systems which facilitate crisis management, citizen engagement, delivery of policy, and international branding. Practices such as coordinated messaging, multi-platform outreach, crowdsourcing, and risk communication were identified as best practices which align closely with international standards. At the same time, the review highlights opportunities to strengthen transparency as well as public engagement through social media and digital mediums. Overall, the government communication system in the UAE is mature and evolving as per international standards.

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### **Author contributions**

Marwa Mathoub and Dr. Adnan Jawabri were responsible for study design and revising the manuscript. Dr. Marwa Mathoub was responsible for data collection and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Adnan Jawabri revised the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript. The authors contributed equally to this study.

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