

Social Media Tracker for COVID-19 Methodology

Analysis Period – 1 April to 15 May 2020

Objective of Tracker

- 1) To track developing themes of Covid-19 communication on social media
- 2) To identify potential knowledge gaps/misinformation in posts or at least map specific potential areas of misinformation

Facebook Analysis

Technical - A customised Python program was written to (1) identify HTML tags in source Facebook pages (2) Scrape all posted content under relevant HTML tags on sampled Facebook pages. As a form of data triangulation, ParseHub was used to ensure scarping accuracy.

Sampling (24 active Facebook Pages across 2172 posts) - Sampling was based on identifying the most reached Facebook pages in each Pacific country. The Socialbakers 2020 report was used to filter an initial list. This was subsequently followed up with PACMAS country coordinators in each of the listed countries (where available) for a list of most engaged Facebook pages.

The sampled Facebook pages are listed below.

Vanuatu	Fiji	Tonga	Solomon Islands	Samoa	Palau	Niue	Kiribati
Yumi Tok Tok Stret and Yumi Tok Stret (News)	Fijian Made	Tonga News Hub	Solomon Star	Samoa Mo Samoa	Pacific Note	Niue Foou Hospital	Humans of Kiribati
Wan Smalbag	Fiji Village	Must be Tongans	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation	Samoa Observer	Island Times	Office of the Secretary	Radio Kiribati
Vanuatu Dialogue Live	Fiji One News	Loop Tonga	Today Solomons	Loop Samoa	Office of the President, Palau	Broadcasting Corporation of Niue	

Data gathered from the Facebook pages were automatically stored in a common independent .txt file. Data files are then run through a customised concordance software for an initial thematic analysis detailing the frequency of occurrence for each theme based on key words in context (KWIC).

Twitter Analysis

Methodology - A range of tools were used including Advanced Twitter Search, Social Studio and Google Trends to identify broad topics, volumes and theme trends. Twitonomy, Bot Sentinel and bespoke tools were used to determine authenticity of specific accounts. 39,600 tweets including COVID-19 related keywords (e.g. coronavirus, pandemic, COVID-19) were analysed.

Limitations

- Twitter has a low penetration across the South Pacific nations. Cook Islands (14%), Fiji (3%), Kiribati (>1%), Nauru (5%), Niue (>1%), Palau (9%), Samoa (2%), Solomon Islands (0.5%), Tonga (1%), Tuvalu (>1%), Vanuatu (2%) (Hootsuite, 2020).
- Numbers are still very small. For instance, anti-Bill Gates related posts numbered less than 100, including bots.
- There is also little evidence of widespread engagement or retweets. However, the frequency of many of these posts mean that engagement is diluted across many posts.