

Methodology (Social Media Tracker for Covid-19) Jan-Jun 2021

Facebook Analysis

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

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 scraping accuracy.

Sampling (24 active Facebook Pages across 146,378 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	

Analysis (1st January to 30th June 2021)

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).

Limitations

- Trends are highly volatile from week-to-week so findings will differ considerably based on period selected

- Defined sample of popular Facebook groups analysed based on reach numbers and recommendations from in-country coordinators: findings cannot be generalizable
- Facebook comments were only analysed for posts with higher engagement rates (<100 comments) and as such not all follow-up discussions were tracked in this analysis

Twitter Analysis

To access historical tweets for the six-month period (from January to June 2021) in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga and the Solomon Islands, SocialStudio was used to get a csv for each country of that included pandemic keywords ("COVID-19", "pandemic", "vaccines", "Astra Zeneca etc).

A keywords library was also created lists that was specifically linked to misinformation (such as "#WWG1WGA") and included keywords that were often more generally thematically linked to misinformation as indicated by previous reports (such as "microchips"), local context (such as "kuvui" in Fiji) and emerging disinformation trends in international Twitter conversations as identified by fact-checking services like APFactCheck (such as "experimental"). Applying these keyword libraries created a body of relevant tweets for review.

A grounded theory thematic analysis was used to analyse and categorise the resulting tweets to identify new or recurrent narrative themes. R / RStudio, with the text mining (tm) package, was used to perform a basic sentiment analysis and to identify frequency of keywords.

A range of open-source tools were used to investigate the authenticity of specific accounts, including Twitonomy, Bot Sentinel and in-profile search functions.