

COMPARING U.S. AND AUSTRALIAN TWITTER CONTENT DURING EXTREME DROUGHT CONDITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Australia and the U.S. have similar dry environments subject to natural disasters, such as the extreme drought endured by both in 2018 (Wilhite, 1986).

Twitter conversations increase as drought conditions worsen and agricultural issues or extreme weather affect the public (Wagler & Cannon, 2015).

Large Australian organizations lack an awareness of the potential of social media for crisis communication (Roshan, Warren, & Carr, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to explore and compare differences between Australian and U.S. use of Twitter during a natural disaster crisis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Opinion leaders utilize influence over members of the social system in which they exist (Rogers, 2003).

Opinion leadership via Twitter plays a vital role in motivating individuals who are passionate about an issue to actively use Twitter (Park, 2013).

Organizations can be recognized as leaders on social media by providing timely information about important issues facing the public (Wagler & Cannon, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Used Meltwater, a social media monitoring program, to gather all content relevant to drought in Australia and the U.S. publicly posted to Twitter May 1 - August 31, 2018.

Completed keyword search of tweets for both “drought” and either “livestock” or “agriculture”.

Meltwater filtered results for tweets originating from Australia or the U.S.

Collected data were downloaded to Excel and coded for tweets from agricultural organizations in each country.

RESULTS

The Meltwater social media monitor search resulted in 586 tweets publicly posted to Twitter in Australia and 2,840 tweets in the U.S. Of those tweets, Australian agricultural organizations posted more than those in the U.S.

CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural organizations ABC Rural, National Farmers, and Vic Farmers in Australia had the most content, engagement, and reach compared to Farm Bureau, USDA, and Ag Professional in the U.S.

IMPLICATIONS

Australian agricultural organizations were more active during the study’s time frame than American agricultural organizations and reached more people.

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Tweet sentiment during extreme drought was primarily negative in Australia and neutral in the U.S.

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Twitter Content of Agriculture Organizations with Highest Social Reach in Australia and U.S.

Organization	Number of Tweets	Engagement	Reach
Australia			
ABC Rural	26	786	985,750
National Farmers	12	150	277,714
Vic Farmers	4	5	47,321
U.S.			
Farm Bureau	6	31	144,515
USDA	5	22	126,944
Ag Professional	1	0	38,682

Note: Farm Bureau and USDA data were compiled from all departments of the organizations.



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