

Topic: Travel medicine in a digital world- social media

Using Social Media Listening to Understand Travelers' Health Questioning

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Background

Social media listening is a powerful new tool to generate insights and understand the patients' perspectives.^{1, 2} Nowadays travelers increasingly rely on social media to collect information in preparation of their trip, including health advices.

Objectives

The objectives of this work were to evaluate the volume and content of posts concerning travel health and vaccination on social media, and to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online discussions about travel.

Method

We used a fully integrated social media listening tool, Brandwatch, to build query terms based on health and travel-associated key words. All the posts in English language were included. An iterative process was used to refine the query terms by considering additional key words and/or removing others to better target the relevant posts. The data points were extracted from multiple sites (Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, travel blogs, videos, photos, forums, news sites, etc.). We compared data obtained between the periods of Sep 01, 2018 – Aug 31, 2019 and Sep 01, 2019 – Aug 31, 2020.

Results

During the first period 1,215 posts (including retweets) were found, while 748 posts were found in the second period representing a decrease of 38.4%. Over the two periods, an average of 79 posts per month was observed; the 3 top sites were TripAdvisor, Twitter and Reddit, and most posts were related to yellow fever disease. Since March 2020, an emergence of COVID-19-related posts was noted, especially regarding certificate needs and vaccination requirements in specific countries. Answers to the latter were found to have been provided by unqualified public and travel bloggers.

Conclusion

This study identified the social media channels used by travelers and their topics of interest. Travelers are increasingly using social media to collect information on travel health needs. The COVID-19 crisis furthered the need for finding trusted online information. Currently, reliability of answers provided may be questioned as recommendations are not validated by healthcare professionals.

References

¹ [Twitter as a Tool for Health Research: A Systematic Review | AJPH | Vol. 107 Issue 1 \(aphapublications.org\)](#)

² [Health Researchers' Use of Social Media: Scoping Review \(nih.gov\)](#)