

Misinformation spreads about Coronavirus and panic kicks in online

2020 Coronavirus Social Media and Search Study by SEMrush

As the World Health Organisation declares the coronavirus outbreak to be a global health emergency new cases of the alarming Coronavirus continue to be reported in Australia. With news updates being posted or announced every hour, worried Australians are jumping online to find out more.

Not only has the virus spread around China and globally with confirmed cases now in Australia, Germany and the USA, so too has the misinformation surrounding the crisis. Conspiracy theories have spread like wildfire across the internet via social media sharing and this is partly due to the strictly censored and limited news coming out of China.

Some people have suggested it was planned to control the population, others have said that it is a bioweapons attack, one idea was that it was due to the Chinese bat soup and others have blamed scientists for deliberately developing it. There are also some claims that the actual number of people infected in China is more like 90,000 and the Chinese Government is covering up the truth.

Olga Andrienko, Head of Global Marketing at SEMrush says amongst fear of the unknown people are turning to social media to voice their concerns.

"It's fairly common these days for misinformation to be spread via social media during a crisis and this was seen during Australia's bushfire emergency recently too. The public is rightfully concerned for their family's welfare at the moment and the lack of news coming out of China and the statements from the Australian authorities calling for calm is driving both online search and social media chatter surrounding the Coronavirus epidemic."

More often than ever these days people are turning to Google to seek answers and this is extremely clear when it comes to the virus. The top question people are asking is if the coronavirus is deadly which has seen a 400% growth between January 21st to 24th alone. The question most people are becoming increasingly concerned with is 'what are the symptoms of coronavirus' which has seen a 700% jump in searches within just three days.

Top 5 questions people are searching about coronavirus online:

Is coronavirus deadly?

What is coronavirus?

What are coronavirus symptoms?

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

Is coronavirus contagious?

Global Search Volumes:

Each day since January 21 the popularity of the search term 'china virus' grows by 15%

Meanwhile for the term 'Coronavirus' it's about 25%, compared to the previous day.

Overall both terms have grown 10 times in comparison with January 20th.

Google searches for 'Corona Beer' and 'Corona Beer Virus' are both up significantly in the last week, when the first cases of coronavirus were confirmed in the U.S.

Online Searches for face masks are drastically increasing - 'P2 face mask' has risen by 8507% and 'face protection mask' soared by 1340% since the beginning of the year.

Coronavirus related Social Media Sentiment

Trusted data provider, SEMrush has analysed Twitter and Instagram activity around Coronavirus to see what Australian people are saying about it on social media and searching for online.

Instagram

Posts for Jan 14-28, 2020

Top hashtags

Top words

Total number of Instagram posts

22,195

Hashtag

count

word

count

Instagram posts used for sentiment analysis (>2 words)

19,560

#coronavirus

1702

coronavirus

24365

Time range

Jan 14-28

#china

1089

china

13656

#virus

994

virus

13561

Sentiment

% of tweets

#wuhan

811

Wuhan

8736

positive

39.40%

#corona

718

corona

5626

neutral

28.03%

#memes

710

yang

4543

negative

32.57%

#news

640

people

3345

#meme

621

health

2972

#pandemic

564

outbreak

2711

Most Popular Post

#outbreak

507

news

2623

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B7q3WMsIneF/>

#dankmemes

497

new

2448

#health

472

epidemic

2188

#coronavirusoutbreak

466

memes

2135

#viruscorona

432

2020

1983

#funny

418

pandemic

1898

#usa

319

Chinese

1851

#regrann

313

world

1595

#alerta

298

meme

1561

#viral

292

2019

1561

#memesdaily

289

dengan

1487

Twitter

Tweets for Jan 14-28, 2020

Top hashtags

Top words

Total number of tweets

1,781,406

hashtag

count

word

count

Tweets used for analysis (due to time limitations)

197,329

#coronavirus

64547

coronavirus

207208

Tweets used for sentiment analysis (>2 words)

175,898

#wuhan

7366

china

55337

Time range

Jan 14-28

#china

6875

Wuhan

31072

#breaking

2468

virus

17542

Sentiment

% of tweets

#coronaoutbreak

2340

people

15670

positive

26.56%

#coronarvirues

2028

outbreak

15263

neutral

36.57%

#coronavirusoutbreak

1574

cases

12785

negative

36.87%

#wuhancoronavirus

1557

news

12351

#2019ncov
1444
health
11953
#ncov2019
1408
2020
11339
Most Popular Tweet
#wuhanvirus
1256
new
10535
<https://twitter.com/allkpop/status/1222162045312782342>
#virus
1185
case
10461
#ncov
1148
Chinese
...

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