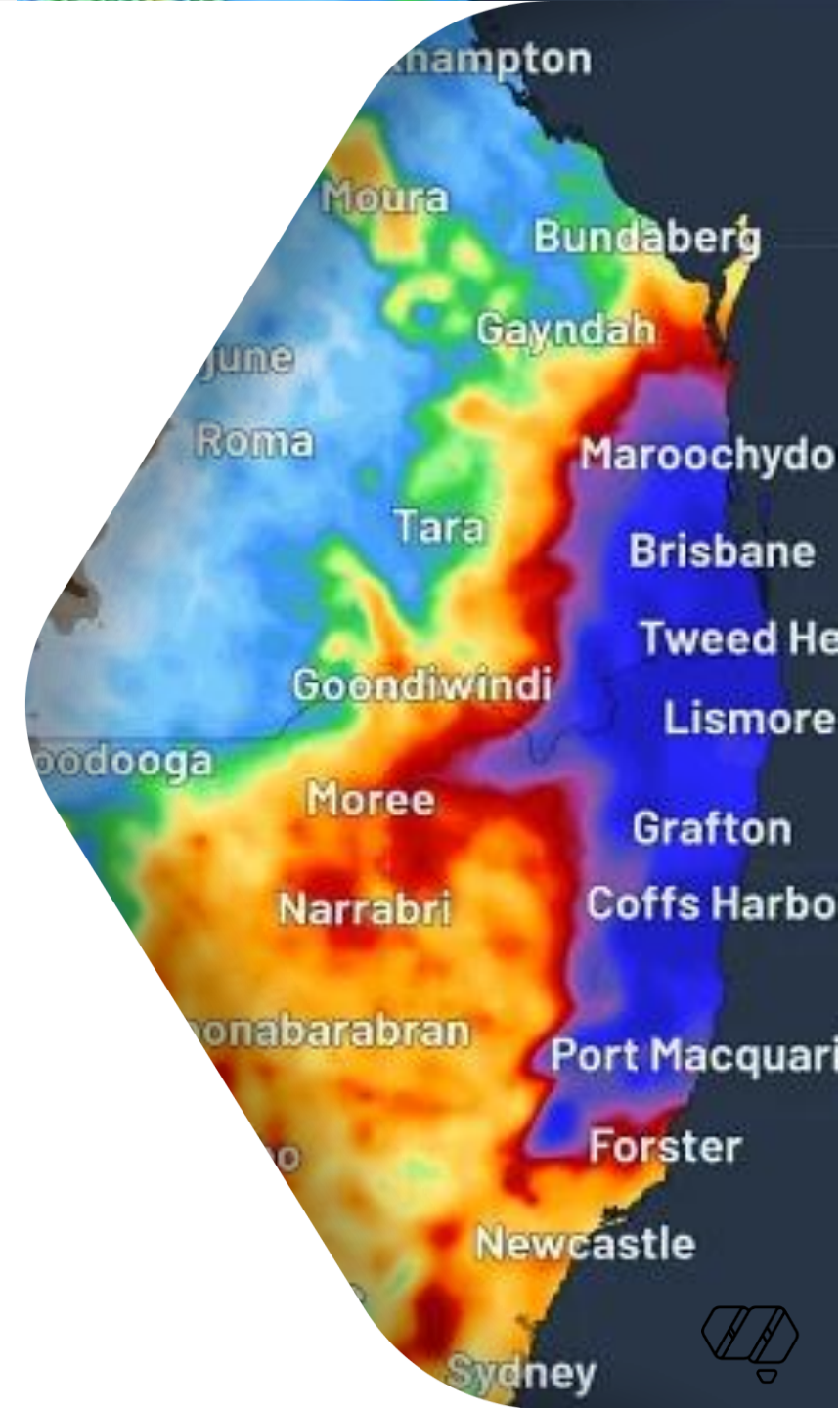


# Community Experiences of Tropical Cyclone Alfred

A Social Media Analytics Approach

**Dr Julian Marx**

Lecturer  
The University of Melbourne



# Cyclone Alfred & Social Media

 The Australian

## TikTokers cashing in on Cyclone Alfred

How Cyclone Alfred helped the rise of the 'weather influencer'. Cyclone Alfred has caused carnage for many but for social media influencers the...

10 Mar 2025



**The Sydney Morning Herald**

**As the weather bureau pumps out crucial cyclone information, millions look elsewhere**



# Data

Stage	#	Facebook	Instagram	X
Stage 1 (keyword + group-based tracking)	10 groups/event pages	267 posts 458 comments	2,307 posts 254 comments	26 posts 90 comments
Stage 2 (account-based tracking)	18 agencies (37 accounts)	~450 posts ~1,500 comments	~300 posts ~1,200 comments	~200 posts ~800 comments



# Methodology and High-Level Findings

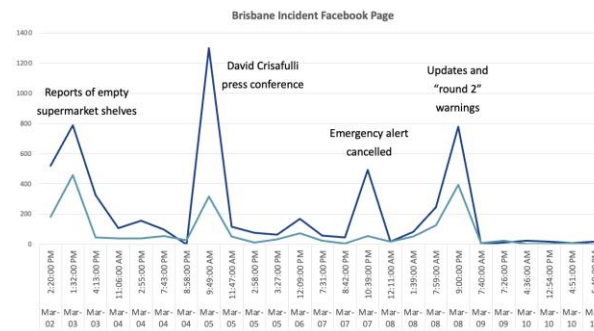
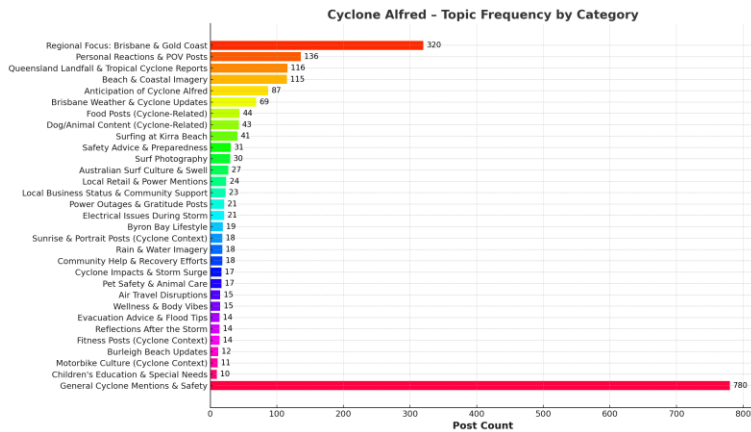
Topic Modeling  
(automated)

Temporal  
bracketing  
(automated)

Thematic  
Analysis  
(manual)

Bottom-up

- #1: Requesting crisis-related information
- #2 Sharing crisis-related information
- #3 Support and Wellbeing
- #4 Humor as a Coping Strategy
- #5 Turning to unofficial information sources
- #6 Exploiting the crisis



Top-down

- #1 Emergency warnings
- #2 Household and business preparedness
- #3 Trusted information sources
- #4 Insurance and financial preparedness
- #5 Extent of damage
- #6 Initial recovery and clean up



# Findings

high information density

text-heavy, static visuals

official sources

“legacy” communications



**Bureau of Meteorology** •  
1.1M followers · 87 following



**Australian Red Cross** •  
259K likes · 266K followers

**Bureau of Meteorology** • Follow  
7 March

Forecast track maps for Tropical Cyclone Alfred are now published hourly on our website. Find the latest here: [bom.gov.au/cyclone](https://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone)

Tropical Cyclone Alfred is currently located 80 km east of Brisbane and 70 km north-east of Gold Coast.

Alfred is a category 2 system, moving west north-west at 6 km/hr.

Alfred is most likely to cross over the Moreton Bay Islands Saturday morning before crossing the mainland coast, between Maroochydore and Brisbane later during the day.

A warning zone is current for Double Island Point in Queensland to Yamba in New South Wales, including Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Byron Bay and Ballina but not including Gympie.

Rainfall, wind and ocean impacts are likely for south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales tonight and over the weekend.

Heavy to locally intense rainfall which may lead to dangerous and life-threatening flash flooding is likely to develop this evening and increase into Saturday. Once Alfred crosses the coast, it is likely to weaken below tropical cyclone strength later on Saturday. However, heavy to locally intense rainfall is expected to continue near and south of the system centre during the weekend.

Separate Severe Weather Warnings, Flood Watches, and Flood Warnings are current for south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales.

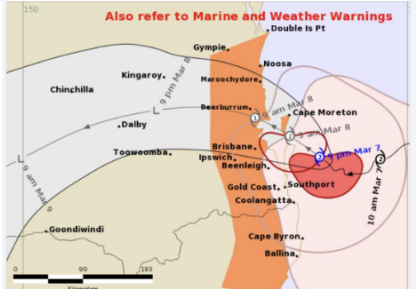
Abnormally high tides are likely to continue causing minor flooding of coastal low lying areas between Double Island Point and Ballina, particularly during tonight's (early Saturday) high tide. Damaging surf leading to significant beach erosion remains likely for the open beaches between Double Island Point and Yamba, and further south over the New South Wales coast. Separate Coastal Hazard and Hazardous Surf warnings are current for south-east Queensland and New South Wales coasts.

Gales with damaging wind gusts to 120 km/hr are occurring near the coast between Cape Moreton and Yamba. Gales with damaging wind gusts to 120 km/hr are expected to extend to adjacent inland areas between Beerburum and Ballina during tonight. These winds may extend to exposed coastal locations further north to Double Island Point overnight or during Saturday morning as Alfred approaches the coast.

Destructive wind gusts of up to 155km/hr to develop about the Moreton Bay islands and exposed coastal areas on the northern Gold Coast from tonight, as Alfred's destructive core approaches the coast. The destructive winds may persist until Alfred crosses the coast early Saturday morning.

Although Alfred is expected to weaken and move inland during Saturday, damaging wind gusts may continue, particularly over elevated terrain, during Saturday.

For more information and the latest tropical cyclone forecast, visit [www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/](https://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/)



**Tropical Cyclone Alfred forecast track map**  
9:09 pm AEST Friday 7 March 2025

**Community Threat**

Warning Zone	Watch Zone
Gales within 24 hours	Gales from 24-48 hours

891 likes · 121 comments · 175 shares

Bureau of Meteorology limited who can comment on this post.

**Australian Red Cross** • Follow  
12 March

Since Cyclone Alfred hit, Australian Red Cross volunteers have been deployed across 20 different evacuation centres, providing over 550 people with psychological first aid across NSW. Australian Red Cross will continue to provide support within the community - helping people impacted navigate the early stages of recovery.

Today, Australian Red Cross volunteers joined our NSW SES colleagues on outreach alongside NSW Reconstruction Authority & NSW Rural Fire Service who are doing rapid damage assessments in community as we begin the transition to recovery.

To find out how you can help visit <https://brnw.ch/21wRgK5>



103 likes · 1 comment · 28 shares

Like Comment Share

medium-targeted, but low reach



# Findings

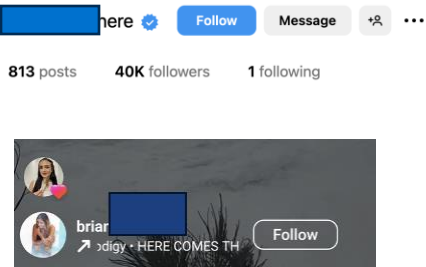
Various sources  
(influencers,  
media  
companies,  
community  
members)

low information  
density

short-form video  
content

low-targeted, but  
extensive reach

algorithmic  
audiencing



# Findings

Closed and semi-public community spaces

**Indians In Brisbane (est.2014)**  
Public · 103K members · 10+ posts a day [Join](#)  
 1 friend is a member

“dark” social

**Gold Coast Community**  
Public · 95K members · 10+ posts a day [Join](#)

hyper-localised and community-based targeting

**Sunshine Coast Small Business Network**  
Public · 10K members · 10+ posts a day [Join](#)

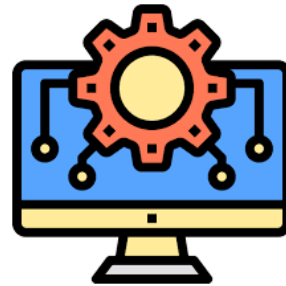


# Implications

There is a gap between how EMA social media  
and how communities consume it



“Legacy”  
Communications



Algorithmic  
Audiencing

(Riemer & Peter, 2021)

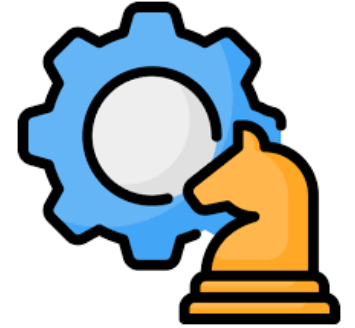


Dark Social

(Marx et al., 2024)



# Strategic Recommendations



- Explore visual, short-form content (understand algorithms!)  
→ E.g. Instagram Reels, TikTok, Stories
- Partner with trusted community influencers  
→ Collaborate with group admins & moderators for organic spread
- Enter/listen to 'dark social' spaces where possible  
→ Work with regional/closed groups, maintain transparency, build trust
- Enable two-way communication  
→ Use Q&As, comments, live updates to build trust & correct misinformation, Reddit



# References / further reading

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