



Information seeking in a disaster

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What the literature says



- People hear/see and then confirm
- Rural people turn to radio and each other
- Urban people turn to television
- All use mobiles extensively
- Web/social media not yet top of mind
- Very few studies post-smartphone

First research phase - interviews



- Four locations chosen for disaster type
 - St George, Qld – slow flood
 - Toowoomba, Qld – flash flood
 - Airlie Beach, Qld – Cyclone Ului
 - Gerogery, NSW – bushfire
- (All smaller, local disasters, none catastrophic)

First research phase - interviews



- 51 people interviewed
- October 2010-July 2011
- Convenience sampling
- Shortage of under 25s
- Shortage of 'battlers' and CALD respondents
- Rich data!

Interview findings



- Different info seeking for each disaster, possibly relating to disaster timing fast/slow?
- Rural residents – BOM for floods, neighbours/families via mobile, f2f, radio
- Urban – friends/neighbours/family via mobile, f2f and email, television
- Previous experience of others in slow moving disasters/floods was important
- No time to listen to radio in bushfire

Second research phase - survey



- Web-based...
- ...and letter box drop of 2000 hard copies in 'battler' suburbs in Toowoomba/Brisbane
- 302 responses – 277 electronic, 25 hard copy
- 246 responses from Australia
- Asked what DID you do/what WOULD you do
- August/September 2012
- Still preparing data for analysis

Preliminary survey results



- 302 responses
- 79.8% Australian
- Majority of Oz respondents Queenslanders
- 79.6% female
- 55% experienced disaster in past two years
- 82.5% of the experienced were via floods
- 6.9% younger than 25
- 19.7% 25-39 years
- 39.4% 40-55 years
- 26.6% 56-70 years
- 7.3% 71 years or older

Preliminary survey results



- How they first heard:
 - 19.2% learned about disaster from other people
 - 18% from TV
 - 16.9% via radio
 - 15.4% visuals - seeing smoke, water etc
 - 1.9% via agency social media
 - 2.6% via agency or government website

Preliminary survey results



- Where did they go then?
 - 27.1% News or weather website
 - 18.8% radio
 - 13.2% agency or council website
 - 11.3% television
 - 5.3% agency social media

Preliminary survey results



- Main sources of info? A toolkit, but 'very important' and 'most important' were:
 - 75.4% news or weather website
 - 73.4% radio
 - 72.6% television
 - 68.8% visuals
 - 68.1% other people by voice or face to face
 - 58.2% agency phone or text message
 - 52.8% agency or council website
 - 43% contact with friends/family via email, social media
 - 41.8% agency/council social media
 - 36.3% contacts in agencies
 - 27.5% newspapers

Preliminary survey results



- Contact with friends and family?
 - 45.9% mobile phone voice calls
 - 18.4% landline
 - 16.4% text
 - 11.9% face to face
 - 5.3% social media
 - 2% email

Preliminary survey results



- Contact with friends and family when you are outside the disaster zone?
 - 72.3% had contacted friends/family who were in a disaster zone in past two years. This is how they did it:
 - 38.6% via mobile voice
 - 22.2% via landline
 - 19.3% via text
 - 9.1% via social media
 - 7.4% via email
 - 4.4% via other people, Skype, police or agency

Preliminary survey results



Slow flood	Flash flood
40 respondents, 62.5% urban	83 respondents, 48.2% regional, 41% urban
Learned about it via: -television 27.5% -radio 25% -other people direct 15%	Learned about it via: -Visuals 24.4% -Other people direct 20.7% -Television 14.6%
Then: - News or weather website 25% -Emergency agency/council website 17.5% -Television 17.5%	Then: -News or weather website 34.1% -Radio 22% -Television 14.6%

Preliminary survey results



Slow flood	Flash flood
Main sources ('very' and 'most important'): -Television 80% -Emergency agency/council website 73% -News or weather website 72.9% -Radio 72.9%	Main sources ('very' and 'most important'): -News or weather website 78.7% -Radio 73.3% -Television 72%
Social media (includes email): -Official pages/accounts 45.9% -Friends/relatives 32.4%	Social media (includes email): -Official pages/accounts 44% -Friends/relatives 42.3%

Analysis to be done



- Age and gender
- Disaster experience
- Time taken to look for information
- Those who reported their experience against those who reported their intentions
- What they think others would do in the same situation
- Location
- Exploratory analysis of Europe vs Australia (small European sample)

What does it mean?



- Mobile phones critical to disaster communication
- WOM, prior experience needs to be tapped into...
- ...so we need to proactively get people onto social media
- Radio should be central, used more carefully
- Television too – needs to be supplied more footage and story ideas to prevent switch off
- Visuals important, disaster location key information – maps should be central to most disaster communication

- Questions?

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