

Diwali, the festival of light held annually in India and observed throughout the diaspora, is a major religious and cultural occasion. The uptick in social media activity around the event is reflective of increased social, religious, and economic activity in the country.

Like Christmas is to North America, Diwali is an event for increased religious observance, charitable giving, social engagements and retail spending. During this time, Twitter is overrun with promotions, well-wishers and various social media campaigns. This year, Diwali will take place on November 11.

Research Questions

Because the nature of this research is socioeconomic, I expect it to be largely exploratory and I don't have a specific hypothesis in mind. The insights garnered through this research are essential to selling products and services in increasingly localized market segments. The central question is: What socioeconomic trends become apparent through an analysis of #Diwali?

What hashtags gain traction around this time? When does activity peak? Who is posting more, individuals or organizations? What is the mood of tweets and what sentiments are expressed; is it generally positive? What are some trends in communication that could provide insights for companies looking to effectively market their brands in geo-localized markets?

Related Work

Muralidharan S., La Ferle, C., Sung Y.. (2015).How culture influences 'social' in social media: Socializing and advertising on smartphones in India and the USA.

Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking 18 (6), 356-360. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25977980>

Describes how Indian smartphone usage will outstrip the US by 2015. Points out the dearth of smartphone marketing data available about this tremendously powerful economic powerhouse. Compares the responses of American users to Indians to find what the two demographics look for in advertising. Assesses the impact of Indian culture on social media consumption, and how collectivism as a cultural ideal shapes the message of marketers.

Kuhikar, P. (2013). Social media as a future marketing tool in India: An overview. PRIMA, 3(2), 15-21. Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1478065466?accountid=14771>

Points out the shift from customer-centric ideals to value-driven modes of marketing in all social media generally, and the Indian subcontinent specifically. Analyzes four major modes of social media, Facebook, Blogging, Twitter and YouTube for potential sources of communication with the Indian consumer.

Kumar, V., Bhaskaran, V., Mirachandani, R., Shah, M.. (2012). Creating a Measurable Social Media Marketing Strategy: Increasing the Value and ROI of Intangibles and Tangibles for Hokey Pokey. 32(2), 194-212. Retrieved from:
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/483426>

Details the social media marketing strategy of a popular local ice cream brand in India. Analyzes the use of various social media metrics to improve customer response

and sales to new flavours. Proves that effective social media engagement with Indian consumers can improve sales and ROI.

Mejova, Y., Weber, I., and Macy, M. W., (Eds). (2015) Twitter: A Digital Socioscope.

Retrieved from:

<http://dx.doi.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1017/CBO9781316182635>

Assesses best practices for mining twitter data for socio economic indications. Provides insights from successful research projects and analyzes other data sources for potential. Identifies possibilities for application, strengths and pitfalls of twitter as a source of socioeconomic data.

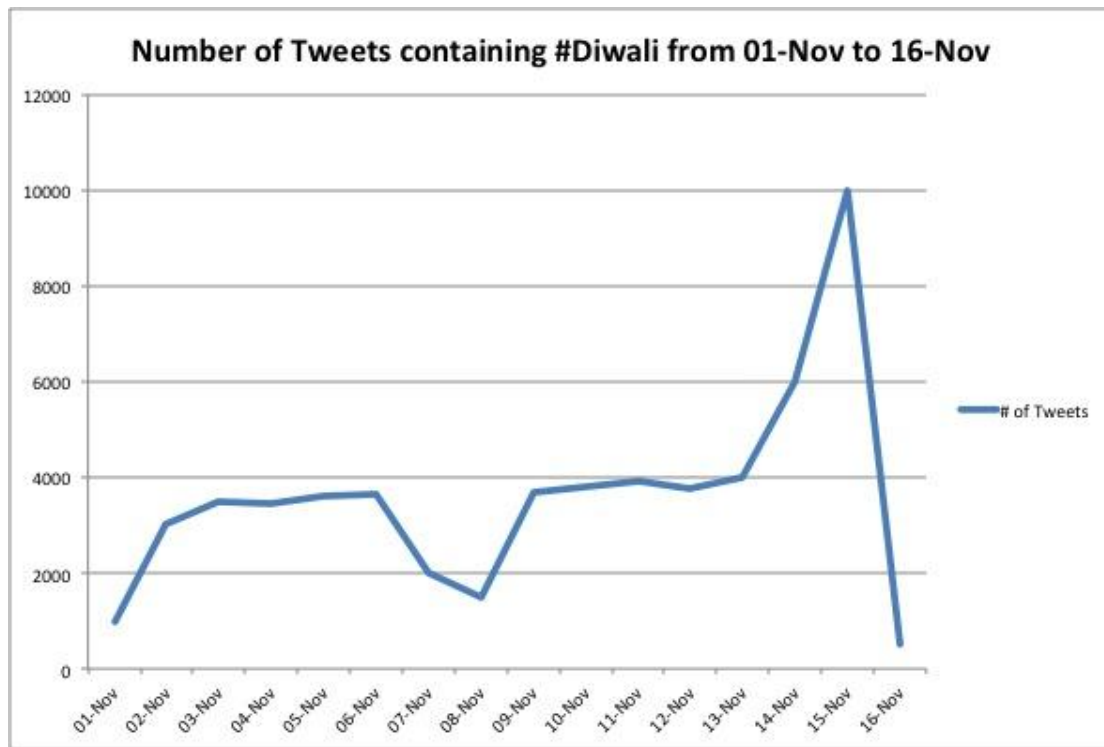
Research Plan

I will start by searching for the terms, “#Diwali” to find tweets that are currently being posted. I will look for associated hashtags that are popular with users to get some idea as to what other hashtags are promoted by twitter or other companies in relation to Diwali.

I’m limiting myself to one hashtag to keep the scope of my research reasonable. Everyday, I’ll run the twitter api to find tweets for #Diwali, over the course of a week to ten days. Afterwards I’ll analyse the results for frequency of use over the period of analysis. I’ll look for trends in what kinds of companies are using the hashtag, what language the tweets are in, how many contain links, how many contain videos or images. I’d also like to do a word frequency analysis by way of word cloud, if that is possible.

Visualization

I'll create a graph similar to the one in Jacobson & Mascaro (2015) to assess the frequency of tweets about #Diwali. I expect the results will look something like this:



Activity around the hashtag will peak leading up to the day of Diwali, with a brief downturn on the weekend, which falls on November 7th and 8th. The day after Diwali, I am predicting there will be sharp drop in mentions. However, since celebrations continue for weeks after the first day of Diwali is marked, there is a chance that activity will hold steady through the month of November, as companies seek to maximize the marketing potential of the occasion.