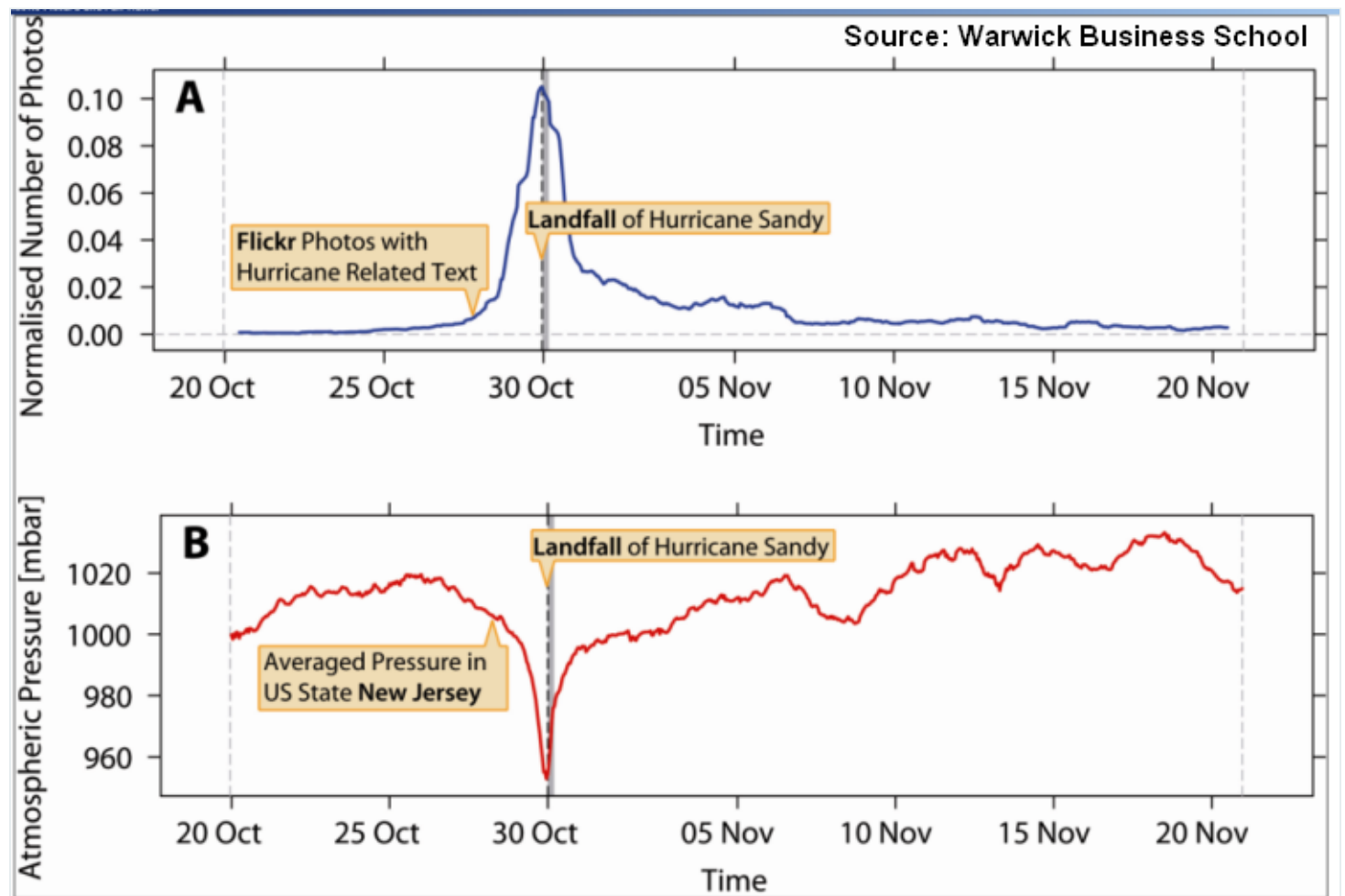


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and the atmospheric pressure in New Jersey? A new study by British researchers says yes, that number of pictures posted on Flickr last year had a correlation.

Nov. 05, 2013



Was there a link between the volume of social media pictures of Hurricane Sandy and the atmospheric pressure in New Jersey? A new study by British researchers says yes, that number of pictures posted on Flickr last year had a correlation.

Dubbed a Super Storm, Sandy became the second-costliest hurricane to hit the US, hitting 24 states in October 2012, most notably New Jersey and New York.

In 2012, a total of 32 million photos were posted on image sharing website Flickr.

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In “[Quantifying the Digital Traces of Hurricane Sandy on Flickr](#),” which was published in Scientific Reports on Tuesday November 5, Preis and Moat, along with Steven Bishop and Philip Treleaven, of UCL, and H. Eugene Stanley, of Boston University, suggest that using such online indicators could help governments measure the impact of disasters.

Preis and Moat's work has previously uncovered a range of intriguing links between what people look for online and their behaviour in the real world. Recent results revealed that changes in how frequently people searched for financial information on Google and Wikipedia could be interpreted as early signs of stock market moves, and that internet users in countries with a higher per capita GDP search for more information about the future.

“Our steadily increasing use of digital technology is opening up new and fruitful ways to document and follow human actions,” said Dr Preis. “Building on our recent work, we asked whether data from photos uploaded to Flickr could have been used to measure the impact of Hurricane Sandy.

“Our new results show that the greatest number of photos taken with Flickr titles, descriptions or tags including the words ‘hurricane’, ‘sandy’ or ‘Hurricane Sandy’ were taken in exactly the hour which Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New Jersey.

“Examination of the number of Hurricane Sandy related photos taken before and after landfall reveals a striking correlation with environmental measurements of the development of the hurricane.”

Dr Moat added: “As the severity of a hurricane in a given area increases, atmospheric pressure drops. We found that as atmospheric pressure in New Jersey fell the number of photos taken rose and as atmospheric pressure climbed again the number of photos taken fell. (See graphs attached)

“Plotting the data revealed that the number of photos taken increased continuously

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“Appropriate leverage of such online indicators of large disasters could be useful to policy makers and others charged with emergency crisis management: in particular if no secondary environmental measures are available.”

Technology

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