

The Significance of a Viral Post on Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

- Social Media platforms have become increasingly popular for communication and advertising. Twitter is one example; it is a microblogging platform where users share their thoughts in 240 characters or less.
- Twitter posts (aka “tweets”) represent an entirely new data field of interest to researchers. No specified methodology for analyzing this data has been established.
- Certain social media users labelled “Influencers” have the capability to quickly share content across platform(s).
- Posts may become “viral” when they are rapidly shared, gaining a high number of views in a short time period. These posts may be in the format of a “meme,” which relates to the culture of the platform.
- On Twitter, posts can be categorized by looking at hashtags. Hashtags connect specific topics and are represented by the pound sign preceding a word or phrase. By looking at tweets with the hashtag #math, posts related to mathematics should arise.

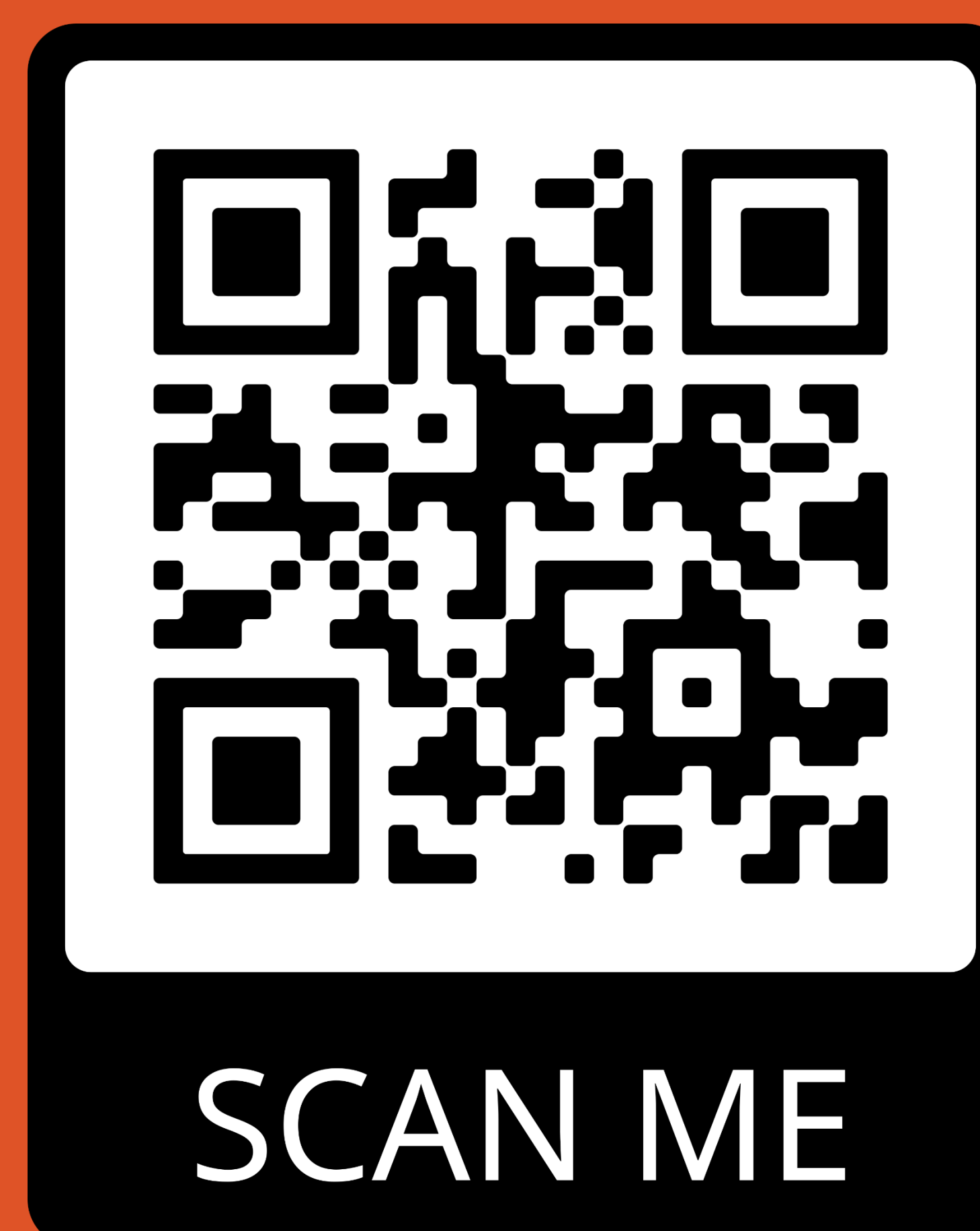
OBJECTIVES

This study uses Twitter data to investigate a particular instance of a viral video post. The viral content involved a man drinking Ocean Spray’s Cran-Raspberry juice, listening to *Dreams* by Fleetwood Mac, and skateboarding. Articles surfaced following the video suggesting that there were spikes in popularity of Fleetwood Mac and Ocean Spray juice. The goal of this research was to determine whether the viral content was followed by a change in tweet frequency related to cranberry juice and Fleetwood Mac, along with the overall content of the data.

METHODS

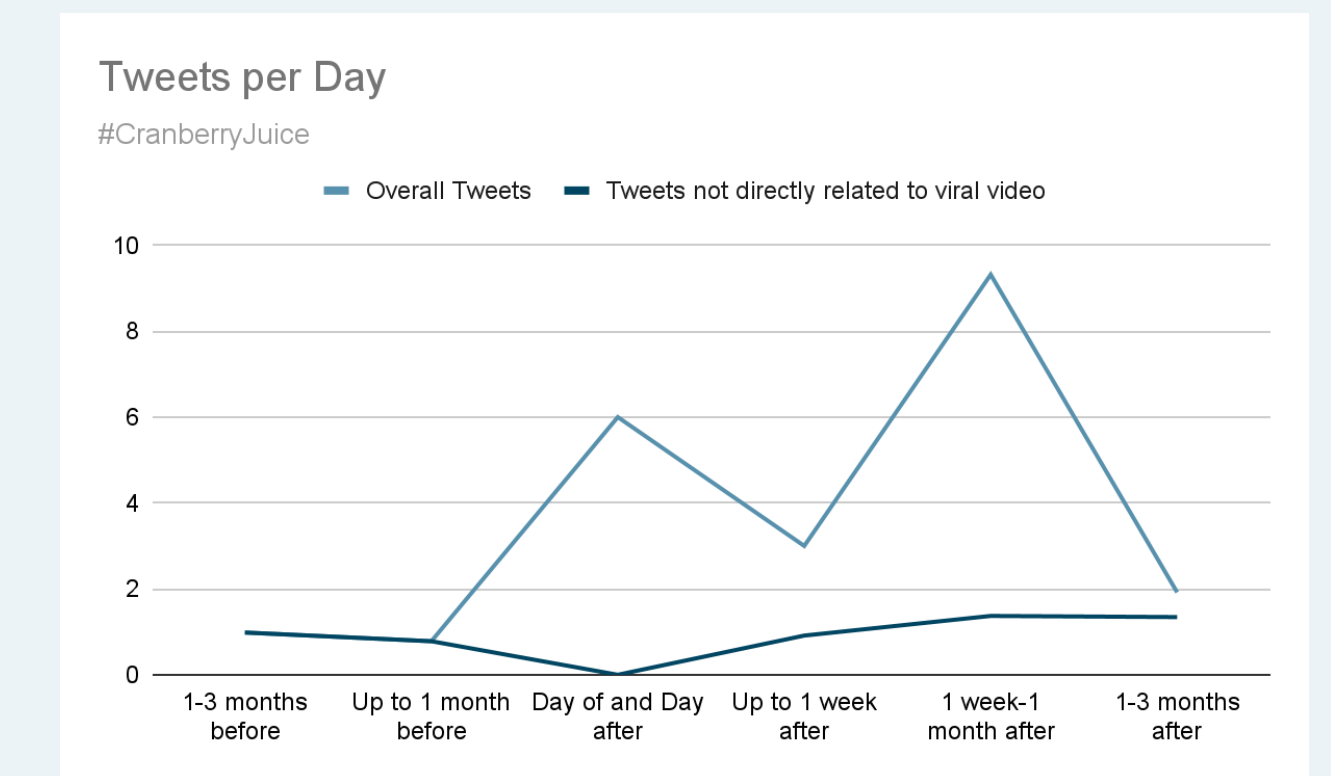
Hashtags #CranberryJuice and #FleetwoodMac were selected for analysis. Then, time frames were picked, from which a sample of tweets would be drawn. Six time frames total were used: 24 June 2020 - 24 August 2020 (1-3 months before), 24 August 2020 - 24 September 2020 (up to 1 month before), 25 September 2020 - 26 September 2020 (the day of and day after posting), 27 September 2020 - 4 October 2020 (1 week after), 4 October 2020 - 25 October 2020 (1 week to 1 month after), and 25 October 2020 - 25 December 2020 (1-3 months after). After finding a company to provide requested data, quantitative and qualitative analysis was done. Quantitative research involved calculating the number of tweets per day within each time frame for both hashtags. Tweets from a sample ($n = 33,333$) were also categorized based on whether they were directly related to the viral video or not. This provided information for whether the topics became popular for discussion in general, or solely relative to the viral content. For qualitative research, a content analysis was conducted, which involved identifying the topic of each tweet from a sample. Tone was also labelled for each tweet in the sample as positive, neutral, or negative.

Viral Posts may influence the attitudes of Social Media users.



RESULTS

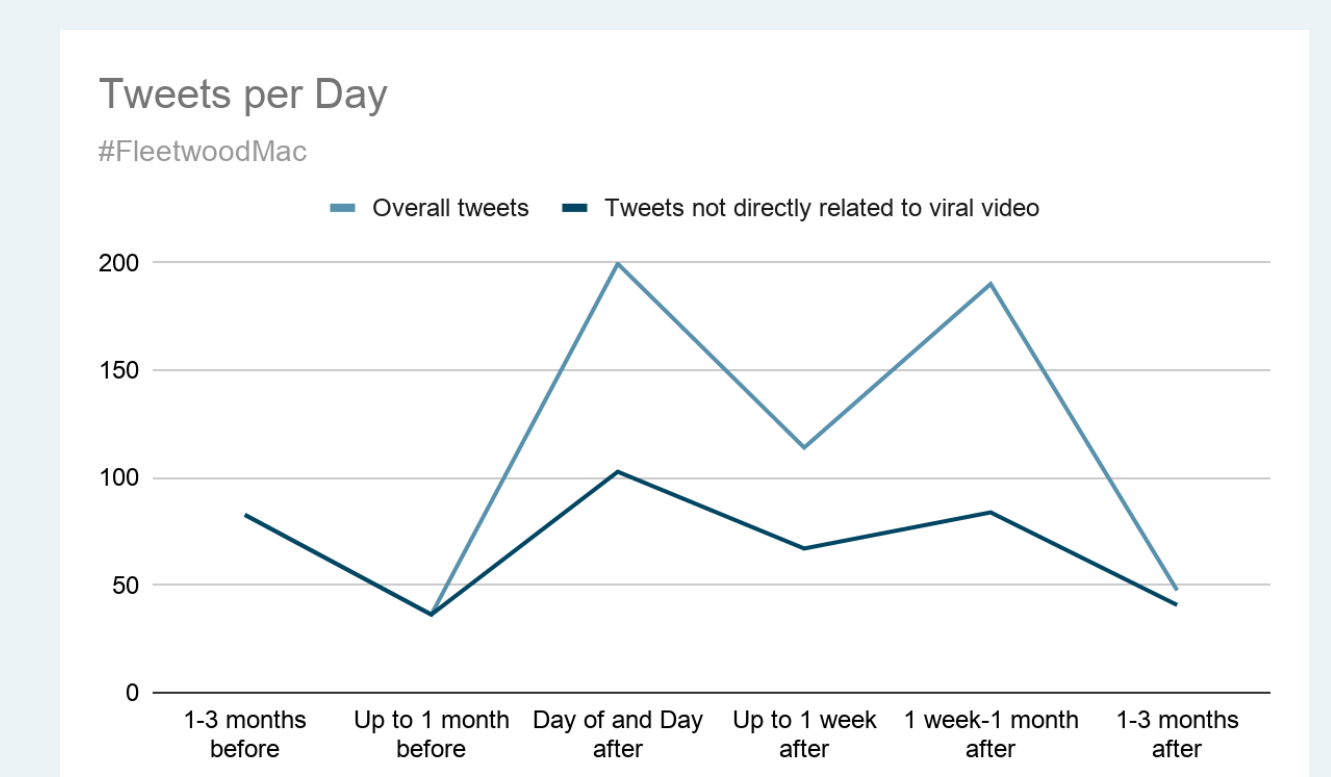
#CranberryJuice Data Set



#CranberryJuice Content Analysis

Timeframe	Number of Tweets Analyzed	Beverage or Food	Advertisement	Health	Taste of Cranberry Juice	Wholesome Content	Viral Guy	Trends	Ocean Spray Brand	Fleetwood Mac	Skating	Outlier
06/24/2020-08/24/2020	30	15	7	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
08/24/2020-09/24/2020	25	9	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
09/25/2020-09/26/2020	12	0	0	3	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
09/27/2020-10/04/2020	23	3	0	2	1	4	2	4	2	3	1	1
10/04/2020-10/25/2020	34	2	0	2	0	0	1	14	1	11	1	2
10/25/2020-12/25/2020	30	7	3	5	0	0	0	5	1	3	0	6
Totals	154	36	18	20	3	10	5	23	4	17	2	16

#FleetwoodMac Data Set



#FleetwoodMac Content Analysis

Timeframe	Number of Tweets Analyzed	Listening to Music/Lyrics	One of Fleetwood Mac	Publication with/about FM	Music Covers	Politics	Popularity of FM	Music Comparison/Evaluation	Vinyl/CD	Public Music	Trends	Viral Guy	Wholesome Content	Outlier
06/24/2020-08/24/2020	34	4	21	0	1	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	2
08/24/2020-09/24/2020	36	8	7	3	2	0	1	3	4	4	0	0	0	4
09/25/2020-09/26/2020	33	4	0	0	0	1	1	3	6	1	3	0	10	4
09/27/2020-10/04/2020	34	11	4	4	0	0	2	1	1	0	6	1	1	3
10/04/2020-10/25/2020	34	3	5	0	0	1	10	2	0	0	11	1	0	1
10/25/2020-12/25/2020	35	9	5	2	6	1	2	1	1	0	3	0	0	5
Totals	206	39	42	9	9	3	18	11	13	7	23	2	11	19

DISCUSSION

Results demonstrated a clear increase in daily tweets following the video’s upload, confirming its classification as viral. There is a slight increase in unrelated number of tweets per day in the #CranberryJuice data set, suggesting the topic was discussed more frequently in tweets following the viral video. The number of daily tweets in the #FleetwoodMac data set seem to drastically change at each time frame, making it difficult to establish a baseline. Thus, findings from this set are inconclusive. The pattern of the data is likely due to significant occasions that occurred during the time period. For example, Peter Green (a member of Fleetwood Mac) died during the first time frame, which could have caused the spike in tweet frequency. Qualitative data from the content analysis can be interpreted in many ways, but it appears that certain themes emerged following the viral video, which led to a decrease in tweet frequency for other categories. Analysis of tone within the data sets showed no significant differences relative to the viral content.