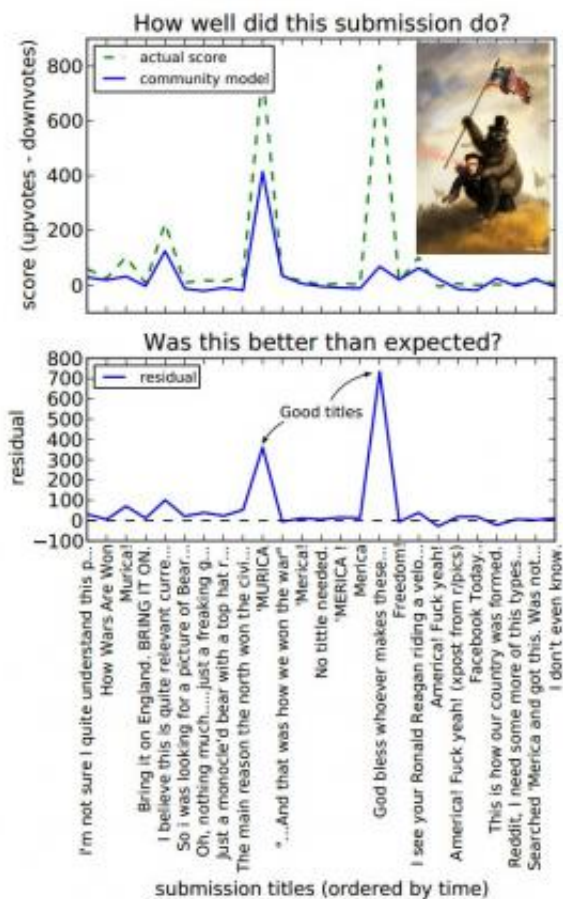


# Stanford trio explore success formula for Reddit posts

September 3 2013, by Nancy Owano



Submissions of the same image (a bear riding Abraham Lincoln, top right) to Reddit, with different titles. The top plot shows how successful each submission is, along with our community model’s prediction of its popularity without knowing the title. Our community model accounts for factors such as the number of previous submissions of the same content, the community (i.e., ‘subreddit’) the image is submitted to, and the time of day of the submission. Credit: Himabindu Lakkaraju, Julian McAuley, Jure Leskovec

(Phys.org) —Marketers and other new media workers hoping for traffic payoffs will want to study a paper by three Stanford University scientists who have pulled apart the nature of Reddit posts to determine what, beyond quality of content, constitutes success. "What's in a name? Understanding the Interplay between Titles, Content, and Communities in Social Media," shows what a clever use of mathematics can do in getting to the secret sauce of a successful post. The study by Himabindu Lakkaraju, Julian McAuley, and Jure Leskovec found that important factors include where you post on Reddit, when you post on Reddit, and last but not least what title you give the post on Reddit. "Creating, placing, and presenting social media content is a difficult problem. In addition to the quality of the content itself, several factors such as the way the content is presented (the title), the community it is posted to, whether it has been seen before, and the time it is posted determine its success."

Reddit is a news and entertainment website where registered users submit [content](#) in the form of a link or text post. Others vote up or down on the submission, and a rank and position on the site emerge. Content is organized by areas of interest, or "subreddits." The site averaged more than 3 billion monthly page views per month during 2012.

The authors explained how they went about their investigation. "We proposed a novel [dataset](#) of images posted to [reddit.com](#), each of which has been submitted multiple times, with multiple titles. We developed community models to account for effects other than the title, such as the choice of community the image is submitted to and the number of times it has been submitted. We also developed language models that account for how the success of each submission was influenced by its title, and how well that title was targeted to the community. These models allowed us to study features of good title, and to understand when, where, and

how a submission should be targeted."

Beyond content, said the authors, one of the key factors that make or break posting success is how the user fashions the post's title. "How should we phrase the title of our submission? Should the title be long or short, specific or generic, unique or derivative, flowery or plain?" wrote the authors, stating this was part of the challenge of coming up with a successful post on Reddit. They further noted that the length of a title does not significantly impact the popularity of a submission's success, unless the title is either extremely long or extremely short.

Also, they found that "'positive' sentiment contributes to a title's popularity in certain communities." Even parts of speech played a role. "Certain communities may favor highly descriptive, adjective laden titles, while others may prefer simpler titles consisting of a few nouns."

Overall, the takeaway from their investigation is presented: "Indeed, we confirm our intuition that good content 'speaks for itself', and can achieve popularity regardless of what title is used. Choosing a good title has a secondary—though still important—effect. We find that features such as length, descriptiveness, and even sentence structure can be predictive of whether a title will be successful. We find that the choice of community also plays a major role."

The value in their research focused on Reddit may have lessons that can be carried over to other types of [social media](#) submissions as well. It is not always easy to assess what may drive the success of various media submissions—is it really the content alone or the title, or timing, or smart targeting to the right community. "We have developed models that disentangle the interplay between these factors."

**More information:** What's in a name? Understanding the Interplay between Titles, Content, and Communities in Social Media, PDF,

[i.stanford.edu/~julian/pdfs/icwsm13.pdf](http://i.stanford.edu/~julian/pdfs/icwsm13.pdf)

## **Abstract**

Creating, placing, and presenting social media content is a difficult problem. In addition to the quality of the content itself, several factors such as the way the content is presented (the title), the community it is posted to, whether it has been seen before, and the time it is posted determine its success. There are also interesting interactions between these factors. For example, the language of the title should be targeted to the community where the content is submitted, yet it should also highlight the distinctive nature of the content. In this paper, we examine how these factors interact to determine the popularity of social media content. We do so by studying resubmissions, i.e., content that has been submitted multiple times, with multiple titles, to multiple different communities. Such data allows us to 'tease apart' the extent to which each factor influences the success of that content. The models we develop help us understand how to better target social media content: by using the right title, for the right community, at the right time.

via [BusinessInsider](#)

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Citation: Stanford trio explore success formula for Reddit posts (2013, September 3) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-stanford-trio-explore-success-formula.html>

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