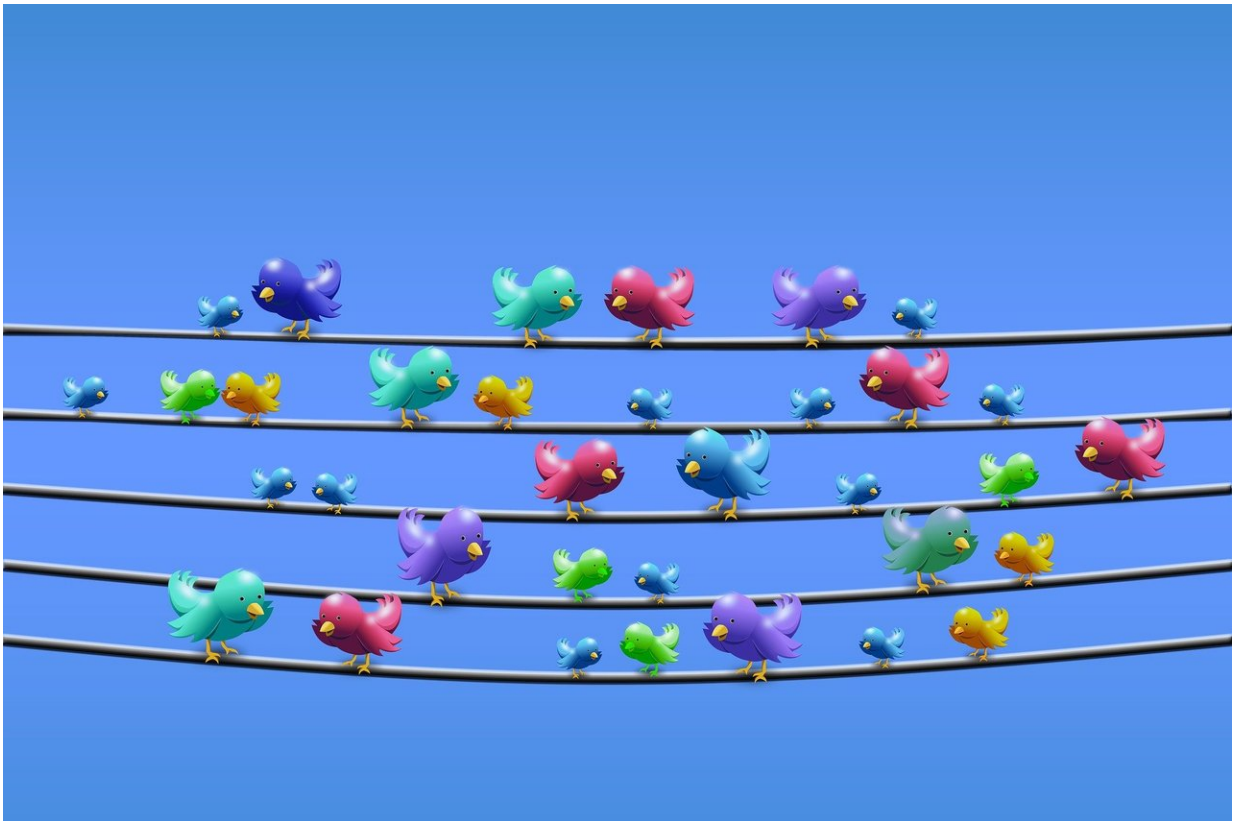


Negativity found to increase chances of Twitter posts going viral

April 14 2021, by Bob Yirka



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A team of researchers from the SINAI Department of Computer Science, CEATIC and Universidad de Jaén has found that Twitter posts with negative sentiments are more likely to go viral than those that are

more positive. In their paper published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, the group describes their analysis of Twitter posts during a politically emotional event in Spain—a referendum seeking to give Catalan independence back in 2017.

As [social media](#) sites have become popular, many people have sought to increase their social reputation by creating posts that attract a lot of attention. Those that catch on spread across the internet with posts being liked and shared by thousands or millions of people. Such posts are, of course, described as having gone viral. In this new effort, the researchers noted that much research has been conducted into the factors that lead to posts on [social media sites](#) going viral—most have found that the primary factors are the number of followers the author of a post has collected, features specific to the post and certain aspects of the topic the post is addressing. But as the researchers note, very few studies have looked into the sentiment of a given post playing a role in its virality. In such contexts, sentiment is described as an attitude expressed by a poster and how they feel about a subject. Posts may have some degree of positivity or negativity, for example.

To find out if sentiment may play a role in virality in social media, the researchers choose a particularly divisive time in Spanish politics—the regional government of Catalan had begun a referendum that sought to give the region independence. The researchers collected 46,962 Tweets (posts on Twitter) from 25,847 different user accounts over one week in October, 2017. They then analyzed the tweets looking for trends regarding [sentiment](#). In so doing, they found that users who posted tweets with a negative bent tended to reach a wider audience than did those who posted messages with more positive oriented messages. The researchers suggest that negative posts have greater virality than positive tweets, though they note that these findings may differ depending on circumstances, such as unique situations when someone posts a [tweet](#) that goes massively viral for no explainable reason.

More information: Salud María Jiménez-Zafra et al. How do sentiments affect virality on Twitter?, *Royal Society Open Science* (2021).
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