

Social Movements on Instagram: A Study of Power Users

Background

Instagram is a picture- and video-based social network that has gained popularity over the last few years. More and more people are joining Instagram and using it for different purposes, one of them being sharing content about social movements. Power users, or people with greater reach or activity than the regular user, have been studied for Facebook and Twitter but not for Instagram. In the context of social movements, this knowledge could prove essential as the power of images versus text makes this social network a powerful means of communication as it can speak directly to the cause people are promoting.

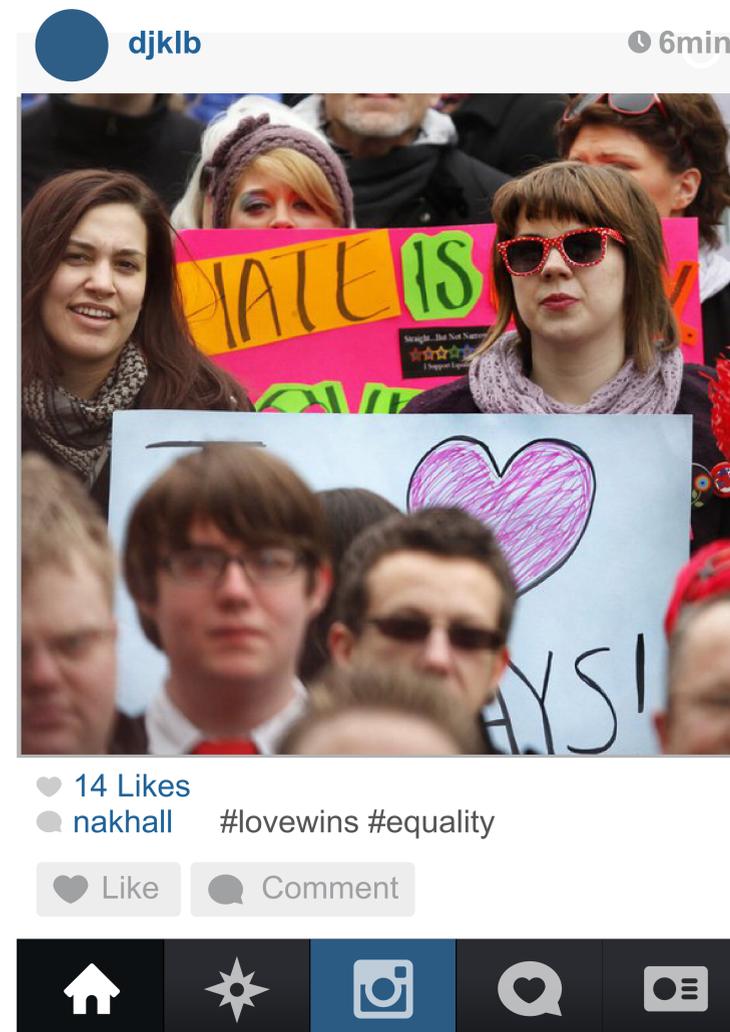
Research Questions

RQ1: What criteria qualify a “power user”, i.e. a user of greater influence, on Instagram in the context of social movements?

RQ2: How do posting behavior and attitudes differ between Instagram power users and average users who participate in social movement posts?

Methods

1. Crawler - to collect Instagram post and user data (likes, comments, number of followers and following) for hashtags specific to social movements (e.g. #rfra)
2. Quantitative Survey - to collect high-level data about attitudes and behaviors towards Instagram and demographic data regarding Instagram users who post about social movements.
3. Qualitative Survey - to collect more detailed data regarding the attitudes and behaviors of power users versus regular users.



Broader Impact

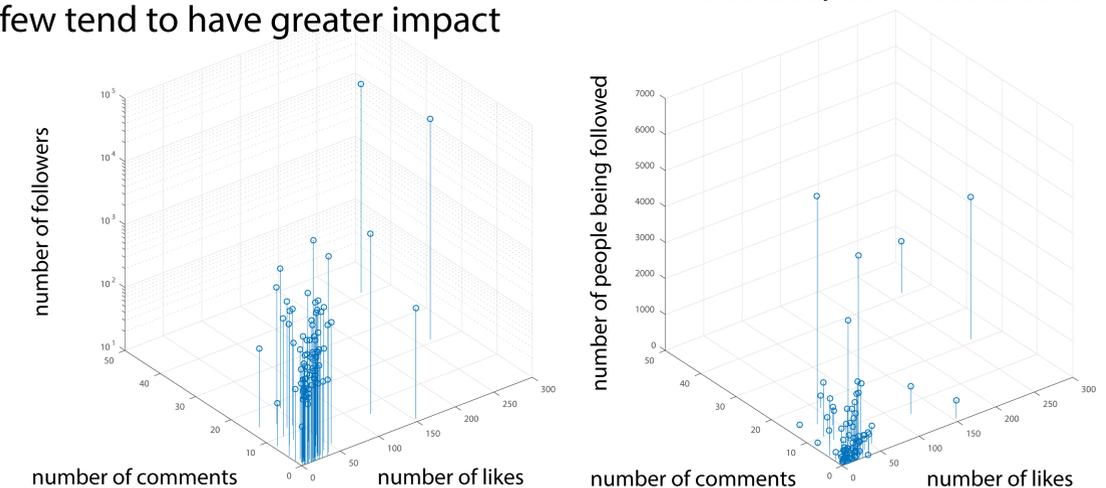
- Proposes a definition of power users for social movements on Instagram that may apply beyond social movements
- Benefits social movement organizers who will be able to target and leverage Instagram users more easily

Status of Research

- Conducted pilot quantitative and qualitative surveys
- Preparation of bigger survey launch (n1=300; n2=30)
- Crawled Instagram data for the RFRA movement
- Obtained basic user (n=1282) and post data for RFRA hashtags
- Started exploring how to identify power users
- Black Lives Matter and Planned Parenthood will be fetched and analyzed

Preliminary Results

- Qualitative responses in line with what was expected
- Initial data analysis indicates users with many followers but who follow few tend to have greater impact



“Bringing these issues to light via social media is a great way to engage others in meaningful debate/conversation.”

Future Directions

- Using additional analyses to see the dynamics of social interaction between users
- Assessing whether the definition of Instagram power users in the context of social movements applies in different contexts