



# Twitter and the Small Business Community: Through the Lens of Media Events Theory

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## Introduction

Twitter not only provides a convenient communication space for small businesses and their customers, but also helps small businesses increase user engagement. To provide a better user experience for small businesses has always been Twitter's goal. With this goal in mind, our team was tasked with analyzing the ways in which small businesses establish their brands on Twitter and how they are able to optimize their presence on the platform to generate engagement.

## Theory



Media events encourage audiences to participate on social media platforms.

Attracts public's attention (Dayan & Katz, 1992).



Emphasize something of social relevance (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016; Jungherr, 2014; Sumiala et al., 2016).

## Hypotheses and Research Questions

**RQ1:** Are small businesses seeing increased engagement in their media event related tweets compared to tweets issued during non-media event time periods?

**H1:** Small businesses who tweet during media events will experience greater levels of user engagement than those who do not tweet during media events.

**RQ2:** Which media events receive the greatest engagement?

**H2:** Small business Twitter engagement will be higher in political media event posts than in other media event posts.

**RQ3:** What does the network of small businesses on Twitter look like?



## Method

### Data Collection

To collect data, we utilized a simple random sample approach to select the businesses that would comprise our dataset. We randomly selected 100 small businesses were selected from a list of the 5,000 fastest growing US-based small businesses, as published by INC Magazine.

- Requirements:
- ▶ Have a Twitter account
  - ▶ Have tweeted on said account during 2020
  - ▶ All tweets issued by the 100 small businesses from January 1, 2020 to December 31



In order to achieve a subsample for data analysis, 3704 tweets from the corpus of 35,000 tweets were randomly selected to be coded in order to surpass the 10% threshold for representativeness.

## Results

### RQ1

Likes ( $F(3, 3700) = 2.926, p = .033$ )  
Retweets ( $F(3, 3693) = 4.469, p = .004$ )  
Replies ( $F(3, 3700) = 1.560, p = .197$ )  
A statistically significant difference was found between media events tweets and non-media events tweets for both likes which indicates there are 2/3 engagement measures that are greater during event periods.

Based on the data above  $\rightarrow$  H1 is supported  
**RQ2 & H2**

Likes ( $F(1, 113) = .145, p = .704$ )  
Retweets ( $F(1, 113) = .658, p = .419$ )  
Replies ( $F(1, 113) = 1.649, p = .202$ )  
Measure potential differences in engagement levels between political and non-political events, so there was not a statistically significant difference in engagement between the two types of media events.

### RQ3

There are 67 unique clusters in the network, though a vast majority ( $n=57$ ) are under 2% of the total network, with all but three of the clusters comprising less than 4% of the total network each. The 3 largest clusters are 27.54%, 14.91%, and 9.55% of the total network, corresponding to blue, red, and green, respectively, in Figure 3.

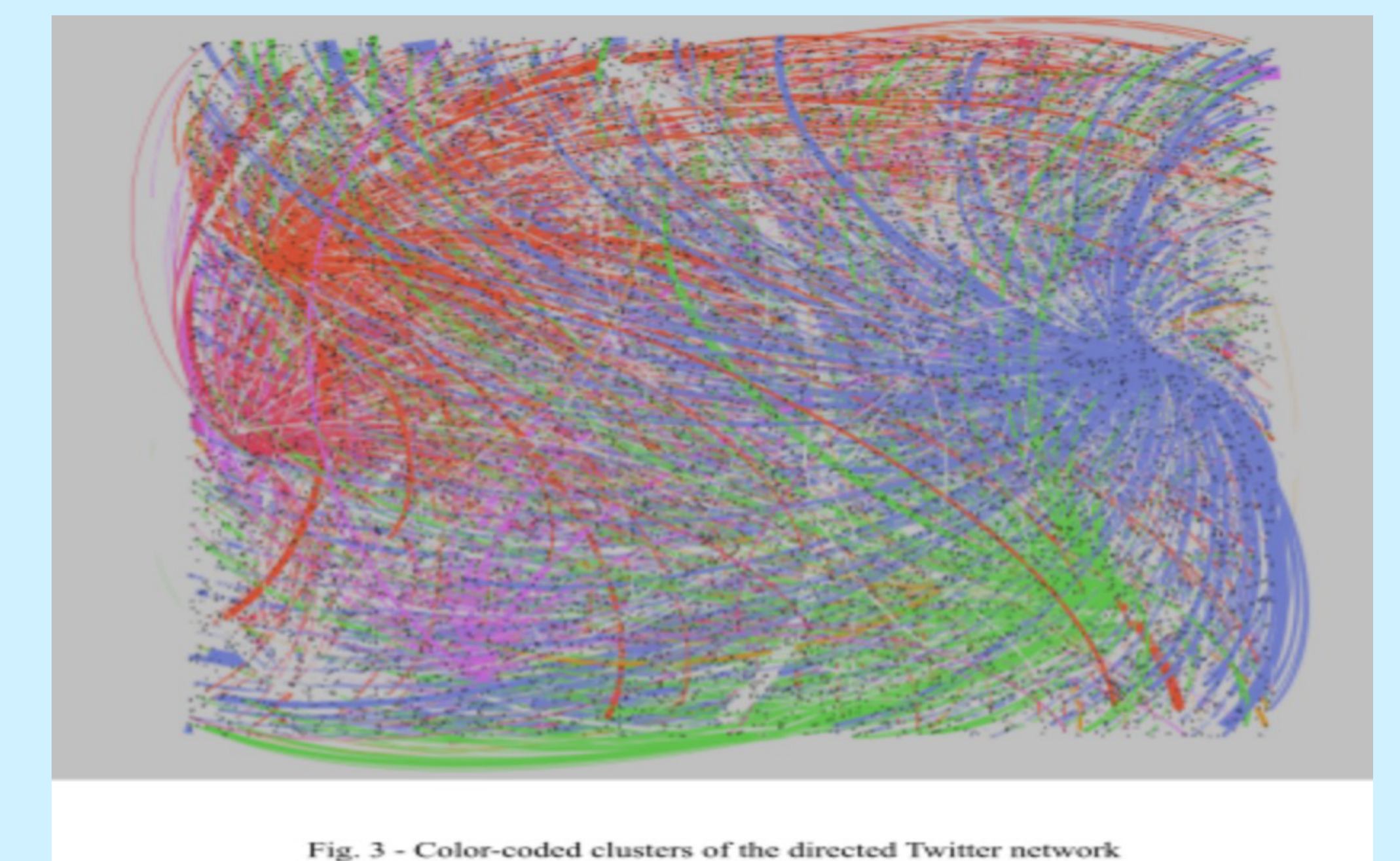


Fig. 3 - Color-coded clusters of the directed Twitter network

## Discussion

Our results demonstrate that participating in media events aids in fostering user engagement, and as such should aid in growing brand awareness.

Small businesses can be one of the biggest beneficiaries of media events.

These events provide a large amount of Internet traffic for small businesses to take advantage of, and affords them the opportunity to interact with potential users and expand the influence and popularity of their brand through social media.

The use of media events to foster social media engagement appears to be a tangible opportunity for small businesses to take advantage of.

## References

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