

# Title: People's sentiment with regard to the right to be forgotten

Select one:

☒ **Poster**

☐ **Work-in-Progress Paper**

## Background:

Digital oblivion has sparked much academic and policy debate since the European Court of Justice (2014) established the right to be forgotten (RTBF) ruling on May 13, 2014 (Bolton, 2014). This landmark ruling gives individuals the right to request personal information about themselves be deleted from the result pages of search engines, as long as the information is not considered of public-interest (European Court of Justice, 2014). The RTBF ruling has the potential of significantly impacting daily activities as information retrieval or online reputation management. More importantly, the ruling empowers citizens by helping them to enforce their right of informational self-determination (Rosen, 2012). While much scholarship has analysed the legal ramification of the RTBF ruling and provided insights into the dimensions of its influence on search engines and regulatory bodies, there is little understanding of people's perceptions and opinions around RTBF.

## Objective:

This study analyses the perceptions and opinions of Twitter users with regard to the RTBF ruling and its development. We are particularly interested in the sentiment (positive and negative) voiced by Twitter users. Twitter is an excellent platform to conduct the study, as much global debate unfolds in real-time around critical Internet-related topics.

## Methods:

We collected 30,894 relevant tweets produced by 18,959 users between May 20 and July 18, 2015. We used Netlytic to gather and OpenRefine to process the data. TextBlob was used to calculate the sentiment.

## Results:

Table 1 summarizes the results of the sentiment analysis. Twitter users were mostly positive when they tweeted about RTBF and sometimes their sentiment was neutral. Overall, the share of negative tweets related to the RTBF decision was under 10%. Therefore, Twitter users generally welcomed the RTBF and recent developments.

Type of Tweet	% of Tweets	Positive (in %)	Neutral (in %)	Negative (in %)
All Tweets	100	83	12	5
Replies	3	77	14	9
Retweets	54	84	12	5
Satellites	43	92	6	3

Table 1. Sentiment measurements.

However, reducing the tweets to replies, only 3% of the tweets were left. Based on the remaining tweets, 77% were positive, 14% were neutral and 9% were negative. The reply category is the only category in which positive tweets were significantly lower compared to other categories. Furthermore, the percentage of negative tweets in the reply category was nearly two times higher than all other categories. The Figures 1 to 4 visualize the sentiments in discussion network of the RTBF on Twitter with regard to all collected tweets, only reply tweets, only retweets, and satellite Twitter users.

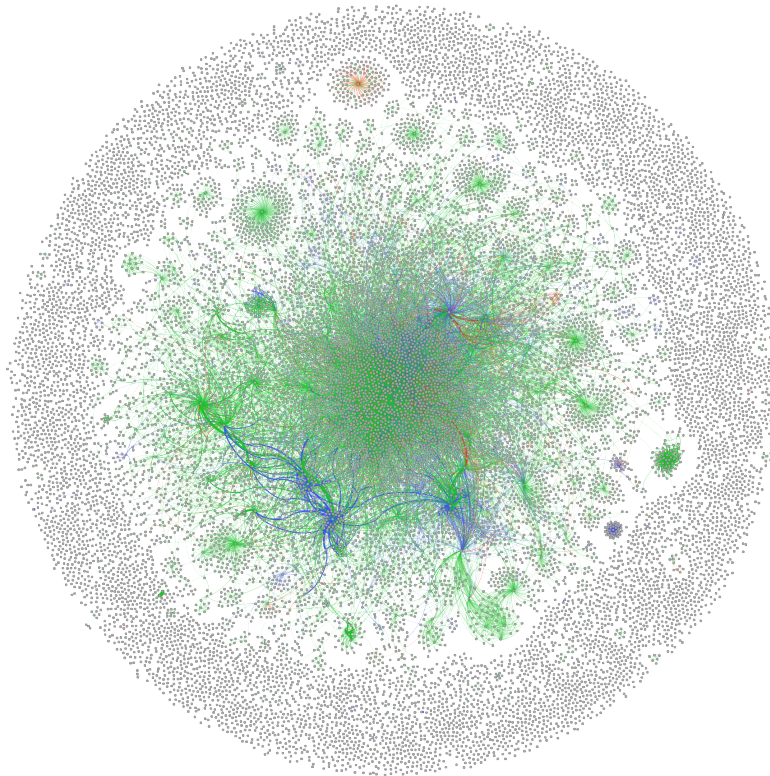


Figure 1: Sentiment of all collected tweets.

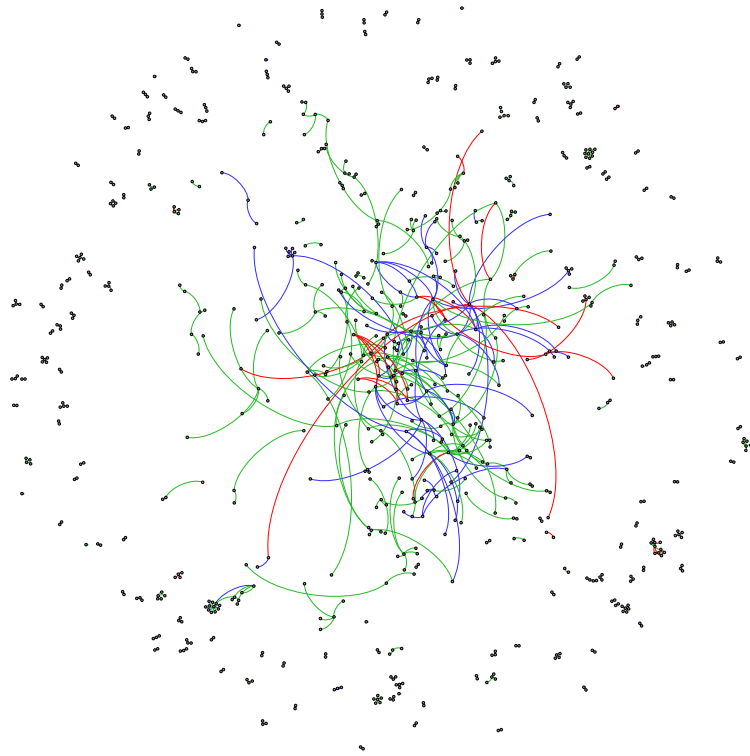


Figure 2: Sentiment of reply tweets.

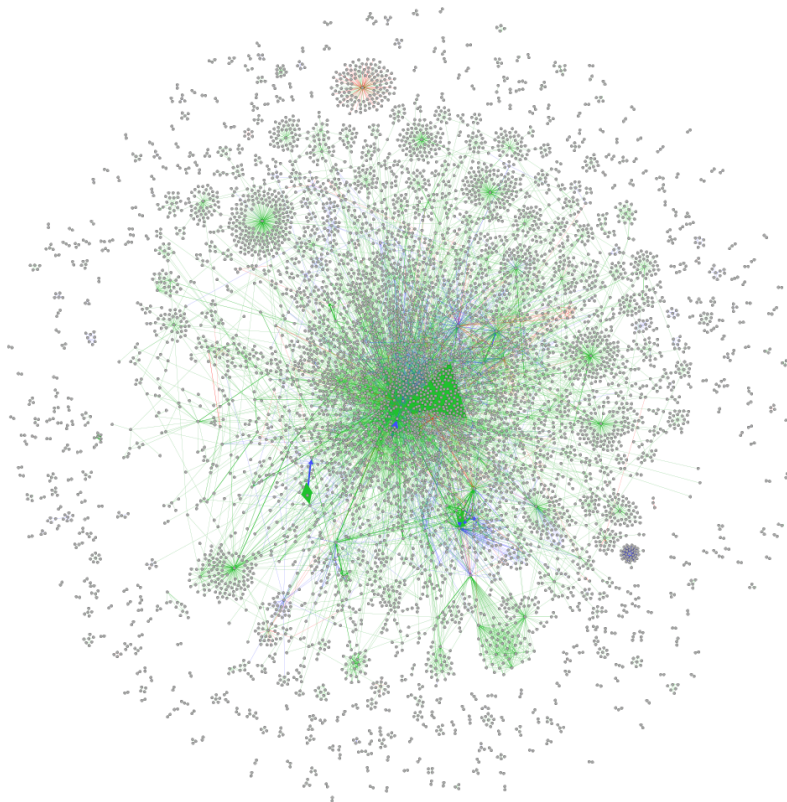


Figure 3: Sentiment of Retweets.

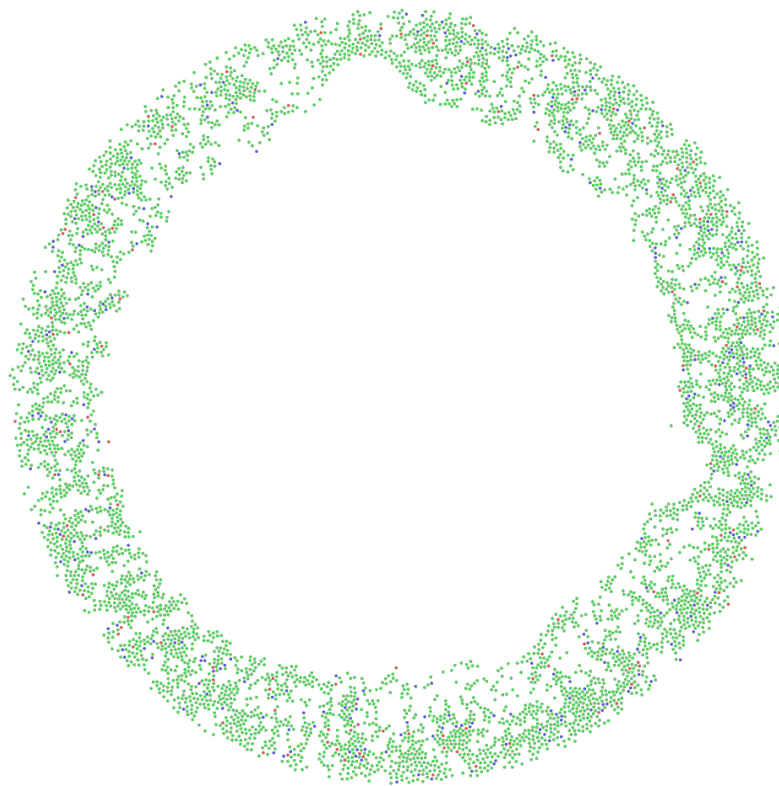


Figure 4: Sentiment of satellite Twitter users.

### **Future Work:**

The general data protection regulation was announced on December 15, 2015, which not only integrated the RTBF, but also extended its scope (European Parliament, 2015). Future research should conduct the study again and investigate if and how people's sentiment with has changed because of the general data protection regulation.

### **References:**

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