#Juneteenth

How Twitter is Bringing Awareness to a Neglected Holiday

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Introduction

  As social media is becoming a basic essential in our daily lives, platforms are also being transferred into driving mechanisms for advocating, amping volume on people's voices, and bringing to light issues that our world faces. Ignorance is not an excuse for people anymore, due to technological advances, you can be made aware of anything with just a tap of your finger. Outlets like Twitter can use hashtags to connect any subject, community, or event together for a greater purpose. In the most relevant terms, gaining awareness for the uprising of the Black Lives Matter Movement and its exposing of America's corrupt systems.

  Hashtags have been used heavily as our country's revival of the Civil Rights Movement is taking off. They are used to get people's attention and inform them, while also connecting with the people who support the movement. For example, a hashtag that has became popular due to the subject's relevance is #Juneteenth. This hashtag represents the bringing of awareness to the day in history, June 19, 1865, when the last slaves, in the Rebellion States of the south, were set free by Abraham Lincoln's, *"Emancipation Proclamation".* This hashtag and its awareness is important because it is an event that isn't acknowledged enough in American history and the Black Lives Matter Movement, along with social media outlets, have been able to bring about the acknowledgment of many matters that are not talked about and need to be heard, including Juneteenth.

  In order to analyze the effectiveness that hashtags have, specifically #Juneteenth, on the ability to advocate social issues and bring about conversation; one hundred tweets, using the said hashtag, were transferred onto a spreadsheet and decoded.

Methods

Firstly, to find the right hashtag, I went through relevant issues on Twitter and decided which issue interested me most. The topic that got my attention was Juneteenth. This is because I did not learn about this event until the Black Lives Matter Movement was put into the spotlight and I was outraged that I was not educated on it. So by analyzing this hashtag I was able to further educate myself while viewing other people's opinions on the matter.

Once I researched the hashtag I was able to transport the tweets, with #Juneteenth, onto a spreadsheet where they were broken down into categories such as: date, user, content, location, and others. After cleaning up the spreadsheet, and narrowing it down to one-hundred tweets I was able to start personalising it. In deciding how I would categorize the tweets I focused more on the emotion behind the posts. All of the tweets decoded were supporting the topic which was encouraging to see no one arguing or being insensitive towards the historic day. I added my own categories to identify the purpose of the tweets by age of the user, their tone, stance, and the appeal of the post. This method allowed me to truly analyze each tweet and understand it completely.

Once the one-hundred tweets were decoded and analyzed I was able to create figures of data to represent and compare the results of the categories each tweet was analyzed under. This step aided me in presenting an organized layout of all of the general themes amongst #Juneteenth.

Data Analysis

Looking at the figures of data composed by the information given on the spreadsheets, I was able to navigate each category compared to another. I combined communication type and appeal, appeal and user's age, poster type and response versus original, appeal and poster type, and communication type and user's age. By experimenting with these data figures I was able to further look into the patterns behind tweets.

In Figure 1 (as pictured below) I combined the data of the post's communication type it presented and the appeal of the posts. It is obvious that a majority of the tweets were under the communication type of "statement", and the appeal most used was "pathos". Eighty-three tweets were labeled by appeal and out of that eighty-three, seventy-seven were

labeled under a communication type. By understanding that I am able to determine that a majority of the posts were statements posted by users expressing emotion about Juneteenth, while the least types utilized were posts "advocating" using a "logos" appeal and "educating" using "pathos appeal". This being said, the users of the hashtag were not posting advocating Juneteenth while coming from a logical standpoint; along with users not posting the hashtag attempting to educate their audience with an emotional appeal.
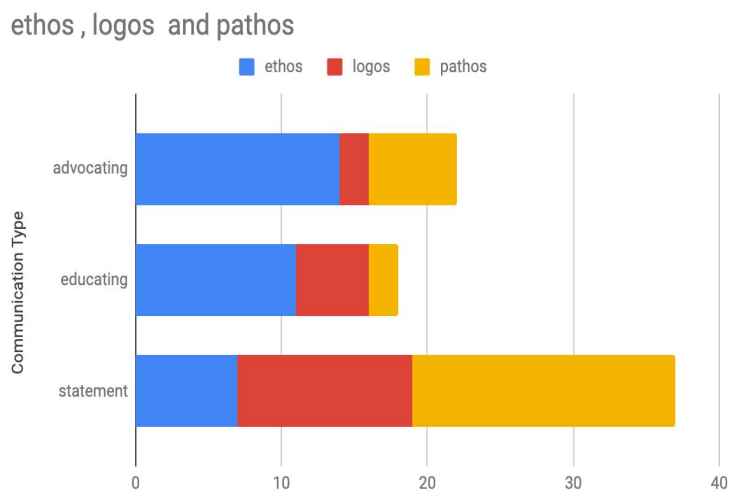
By creating figure 2 (as pictured below) I was able to see the user's age and what appeal types were being used by each of those categories. Middle aged user's held the majority of the posts. I was surprised by this considering how much I see the younger generation is stepping up on social media. Once I dug more into this I realized most of the user's using the hashtag were professionals using it to raise awareness on bills that are being created in response to Juneteenth's most recent resurrection into the limelight. The

20's, 30's , 40's, 60's and middle aged

category, "20's" for the user's age group was the least presented on the spreadsheet. I theorize this is because I see the younger generations not using hashtags tailored to a specific subject, like the one used, too often.
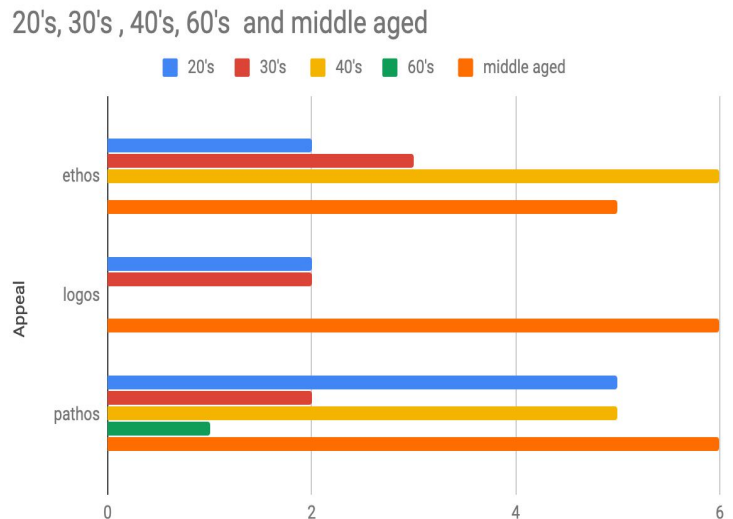
The third figure compares the poster type and whether or not the post was an original or was a response to another post. The information (as shown on the right) makes it clear how individuals were posting more about Juneteenth than were organizations. Since it is such a specific hashtag individuals used it more to express their personal feelings and opinions on the matter. Even though there were more

individual and organization

Response vs. Original
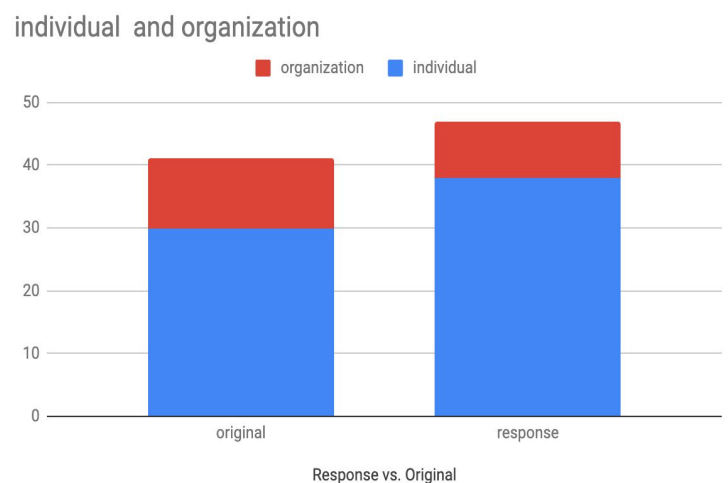
individual users a bulk of the posts were responses to other posts, outlets, or users. Which goes to show how users were conducting conversations about the subject and advocating it.

Going off of that, in figure 4, where I placed the poster type and the appeal, I aimed to examine if individual users valued emotion over logic. In the data received (as seen below) this is proven to be true.

Organizations gravitated towards a mostly ethos standpoint where they would use creditable figures to get their point across. This can also be brought up that

individual and organization

organizations and brands take part in preformative activism, just to check a box and make their audience content.

Lastly, I explored combining the user's age with their communication type in figure five.

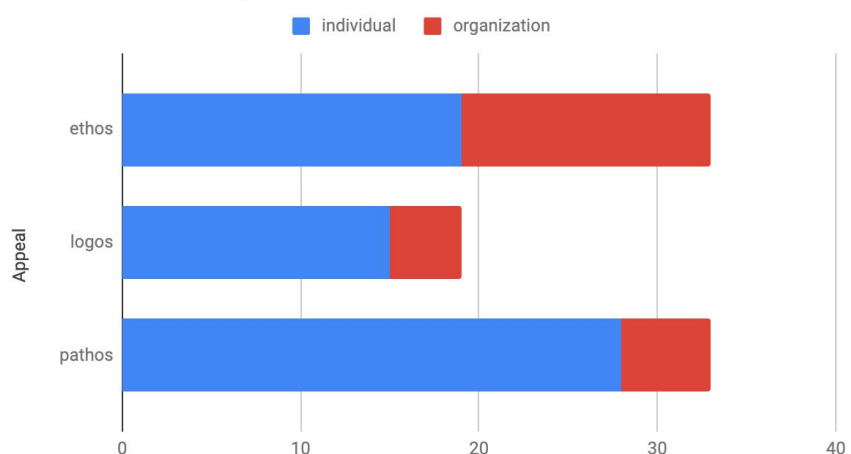By combining the two categories I was able to detect what communication type each age group used most. The younger ages groups lean towards advocating while the middle aged and up users
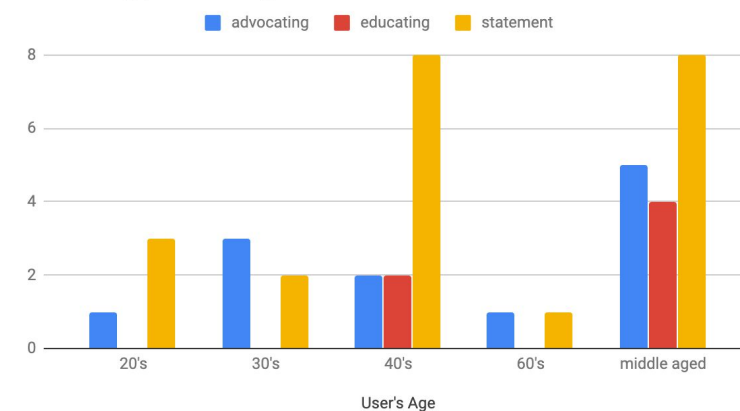
advocating , educating and statement

posted the most statements. Younger generations utilize social media platforms to have their voices heard and this data proves that.

Discussions and Conclusion

Most of the tweets that were analyzed about Juneteenth were advocating the subject through providing links and information about the day. Tweets like Faith in Action's post stating, " '#Juneteenth is supposed to be a day of celebrating black emancipation, and yet we are still enslaved to a system in which it is broken, unjust, and inhumane.' - Pastor Rhonda Thomas", uses emotion and a strong quote to grab the user's attention. On the other side of ethos and pathos appeal, there are many posts that express what is being down due to the awareness of Juneteenth. For example, Aaron Michlewitz tweeted, "Very proud to vote to make #Juneteenth a State Holiday in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, forever memorializing June 19th. Thank you to the members of the @MA_BLLC for bringing this day to the forefront. Great speeches by Rep. Bud Williams & @RepChynahTyler #BlackLivesMatter". This is important because tweets similar to this one emphasize the action being taken as a result of people using their voices and platforms on social media, and it is an affirmation of victory towards equality.

The one-hundred tweets that were decoded in this process all served a purpose of raising awareness of Juneteenth no matter what category they were put into. From what I could determine they all contributed to a positive outlook on the subject. As we navigate how to handle national issues as citizens and what we can do on our ends breaking our silences and using our platforms is a good place to start. Hashtags are the most efficient vehicle to help us raise our voices and extend a virtual hand to someone else who is fighting the same fight.

Work Cited

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