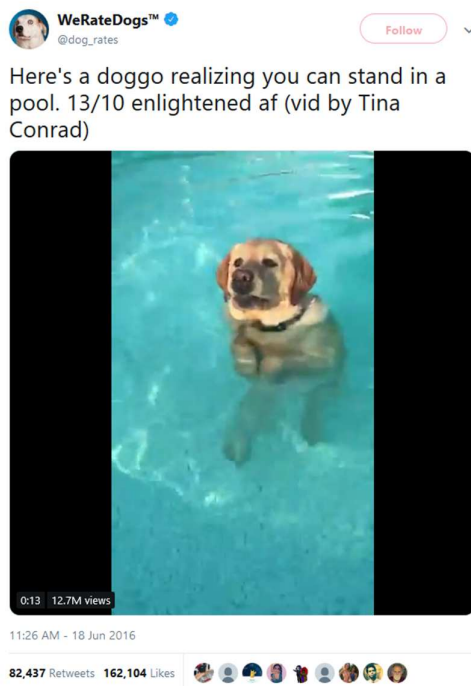# This is *WeRateDogs*. And the rating out of 10 is…

By Jennifer Romana, May 2019

WeRateDog Twitter account is a celebration of Man's Best Friend. Humorous comments, a generous rating system that routinely exceeds 10/10 and adorable pup pictures have helped the account reach 8k+ followers and international media coverage.

The two most popular dog rating Tweets at WeRateDogs
*Source (Left): https://twitter.com/dog_rates/status/744234799360020481/video/1*
Source (Right): https://twitter.com/dog_rates/status/739238157791694849/video/1`

Nevertheless, this feel good pup party has courted controversy when *WeRateDogs* founder and owner, Matt Nelson, was accused of 'whitewashing' when he changed a dog's name from *Kanan,* which is of Arabic origins, to the more common *George.* Nelson has since responded to the controversy with the defense that he found "people really enjoy common 'old man' names that contrast a pic of an adorable puppy." Furthermore he shared, "You're more likely to engage and interact with a post when a dog shares a name with your own or you've encountered a dog with that name."

If Nelson has determined that a name, that is not even on every dog rating tweet, can increase engagement with a post and thus helping to boost the account's following, what other factors could be driving the account's popularity? We look at the *WeRateDog* Twitter data between mid-November 2015 and 1 August 2017 to see if we can find any insights to explain the account's success.

First, what is 'Popular'?

If a tweet's popularity is proxied by how many retweets and likes (favourites) it has, with a higher number in both equating to more popular, we can analyze patterns in popular dog rating Tweets that in turn help increase the popularity of *WeRateDogs.*

Correlation between number of Retweets and number of Likes
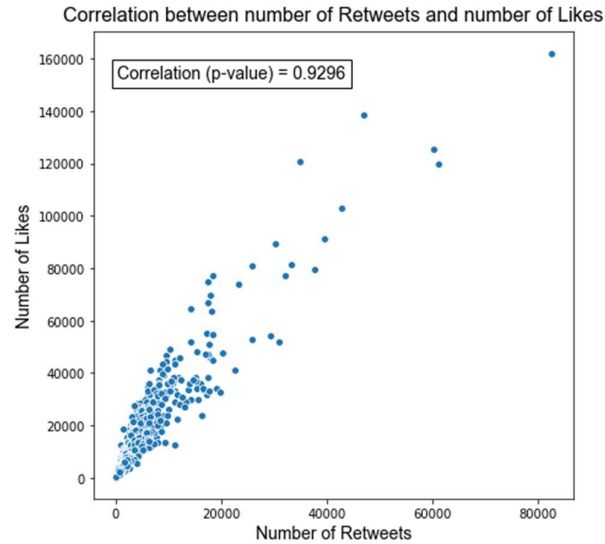
Number of retweets and number of likes are highly positively correlated with each other, with a correlation coefficient of 0.9296. Thus any further analysis involving popularity will just use *Number of Retweets* as proxy.

Furthermore, this aligns with our investigation of what contributes to the popularity and high following of *WeRateDogs*. While likes and favourites reflects the quality of engagement with followers, Retweets does this plus further distributes a tweet, reaching out to potential followers.

Is High Tweeting Activity necessary to achieve popularity?

Number of Tweets (Left Axis) and Retweets (Right Axis) over Time
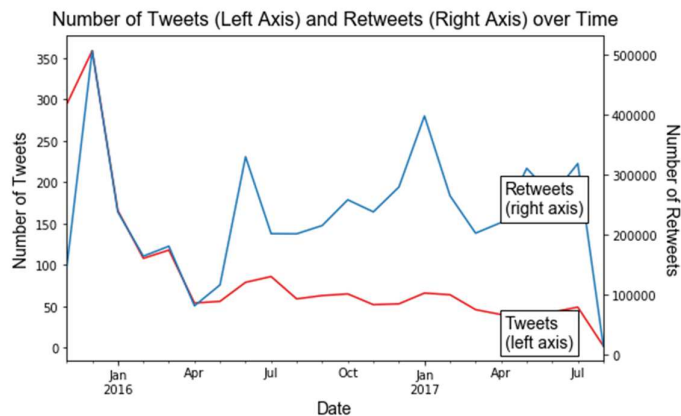
Looking only at the pattern of tweeting activity for *dog rating* Tweets, *WeRateDogs* has decreased its activity significantly since inception. Starting out at 300 Tweets per month and peaking at 350 Tweets in December 2015, Nelson has dropped the number of dog rating Tweets to around 50 per month. However retweets for these tweets has remained elevated, generally around the 2000 Retweets per month mark. So you don't have to be constantly Tweeting until your fingers are blue in order to be the most popular kid on this block. This however does not take into account how Nelson engages with followers in other ways such as replies and retweeting their Tweets.

Of note is that spike towards the beginning of the dataset. This coincides with the timing of 2 tweets that are in the top 20 most popular Tweets.
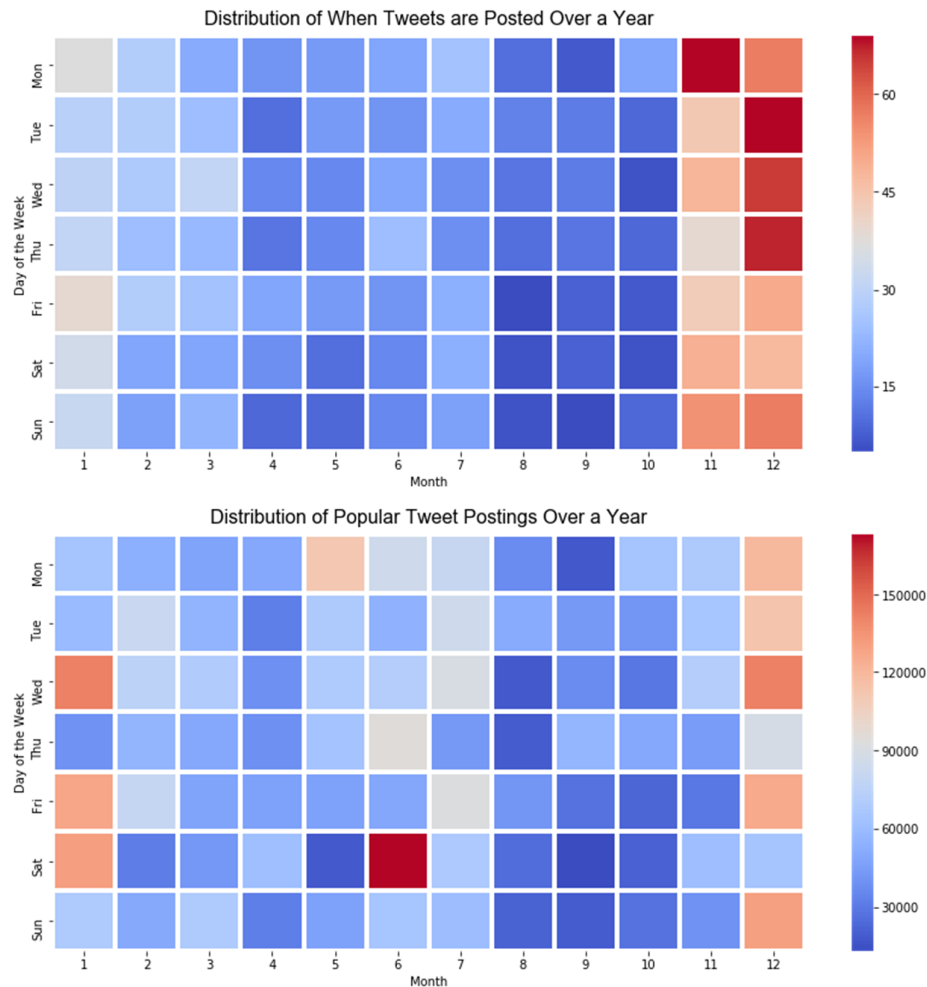

Two of the Tweets that started it all
Source (Left): https://twitter.com/dog_rates/status/678399652199309312/video/1 ;
Source (Right): https://twitter.com/dog_rates/status/676219687039057920?lang=en

Knowing When to Tweet

As they say, *timing is everything*.   Nelson at *WeRateDogs* has alluded to using techniques in order to increase engagement with followers. Could the secret sauce to success lie not *how often* but *when* you post a Tweet?

Distribution of When Tweets are Posted Over a Year

Distribution of Popular Tweet Postings Over a Year

Woah, if we were talking about weather, I would've said the top heat map shows Australia. Instead, it shows the Tweeting pattern of Nelson over the course of a year, aggregated over month and day of week. So it looks like Nelson tends to get his Tweeting mojo on in November and December showing higher Tweeting activity. With cold weather and warm celebrations approaching, who wouldn't want to Tweet out some cute dog ratings?

However looking at the bottom heatmap, this warm and fuzzy strategy doesn't necessarily mean those Tweets would become the most popular. More Tweets should equal more retweets in aggregation but look at that hot spot burning in June. Saturday to be more precise. Turns out our top 2 most popular tweets both occurred on a Saturday in June, 3 weeks apart in 2016. Coincidence? Or perhaps, like the effect of those 2 hugely popular mid-December 2015 Tweets, there is a case of popularity begets popularity?

Ratings + Humor = A Recipe for Success?

WeRateDogs is known for its, wait for it… dog ratings. Could there be some magic rating number that coincides with the popularity of the Tweet?

Let's first look at the distribution of ratings to get an idea of Nelson's unique ratings system.
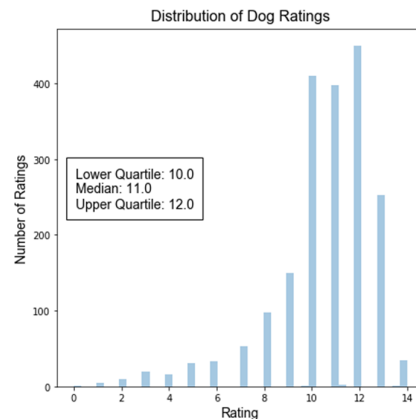
As we can see, the number of ratings peak in the range 10-12 and yes this is a '10 out of 10' rating system – we told you the system was unique. In fact over 75% of Tweets received a rating over 10. Makes you sad for the poor doggos that received a rating 7 and under – that 7 would have normally been about a 'B', but now that's what? A big fat FAIL? Let's be glass-half-full kind of people and assume those low ratings were a joke. Which leads us to Humour.

Along with dog ratings, the account is also known for humorous content, could the funnier Tweets be sending followers into fits of giggles while simultaneously clicking Retweet Retweet Retweet?

Using image predictive data that gives a prediction of what is in the Tweet photo, let's proxy *humour* by predictions that were *not* a dog. Because why would a dog rating account rate something that was not a dog? Surely there must be a joke in there somewhere!
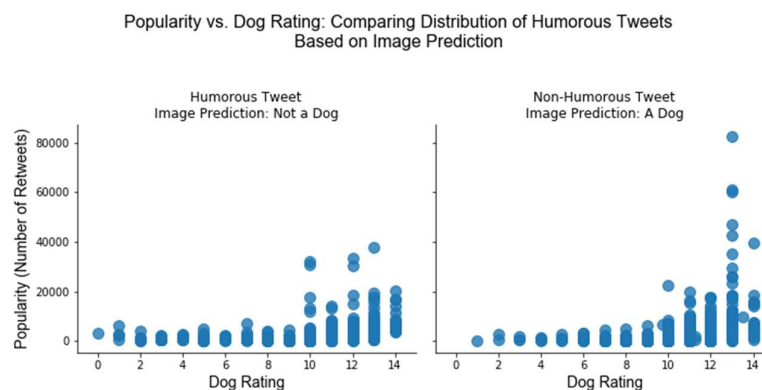

Uh oh. Not only do these graphs tell us that our humorous tweets were not the most popular, but those sub 7 ratings – also not popular!

Let's look at humour another way. Maybe Nelson uses some key words or phrases that tickle our funny bone causing us to rapidly and repeatedly click Retweet.

Notable phrases in our *humorous* Tweets that suggest the photo does not immediately look like a dog are:

- 'We only rate dogs'
- 'Please only send photos of dogs'
- 'Another photo without a dog'

Popularity vs. Dog Rating: Comparing Distribution of Humorous Tweets
(Based on Text)
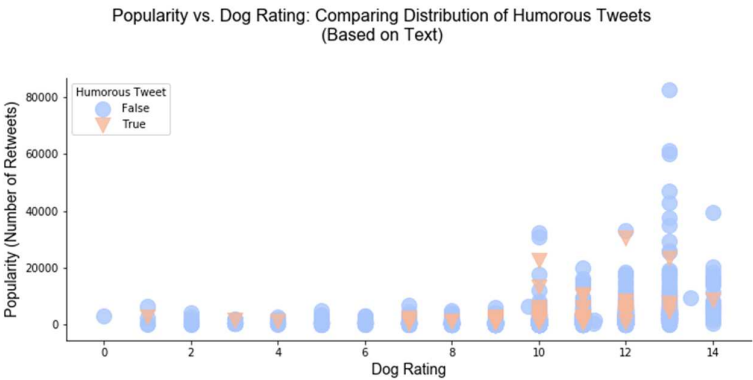
Again, our humorous Tweets don't necessarily become the most popular.

The Cuteness Factor

Nelson made mention that "people really enjoy common 'old man' names that contrast a pic of an adorable puppy."

Let's explore the *'Cute Name'* factor by comparing the 20 most common dog names in the dataset with the names of dog in the top 20 Tweets.

20 Most common dog names	
1. Oliver	11. Lola
2. Cooper	12. Jax
3. Charlie	13. Bella
4. Lucy	14. Bo
5. Penny	15. Stanley
6. Tucker	16. Koda
7. Sadie	17. Chester
8. Winston	18. Rusty
9. Toby	19. Bailey
10. Daisy	20. Buddy

Dog Names found in 20 most popular Tweets	Ranking
Stephan	3
Duddles	5
Bo	6
Jamesy	8
Kenneth	10
Buddy	13
Zoey	15
Sunny	18
Hurley	19

Under half the dogs in the 20 most popular Tweets were attributed a name and only 1 out these 9 names were in the 20 most dog common names. That name was Buddy, common dog name #20.

What about the '*Cute Little Puppy*' factor?

As defined by *WeRateDogs'* 'The Dogtionary',

- Doggo: A big pupper, usually older. This does not stop a doggo from behaving like a pupper
- Pupper: A small doggo, usually younger. Can be equally if not more mature than some doggos
- Puppo: A transitional phase between pupper and doggo. Easily understood as the dog equivalent of a teenager
- Floof: Any dog really. However this label is commonly given to dogs with seemingly excess fur
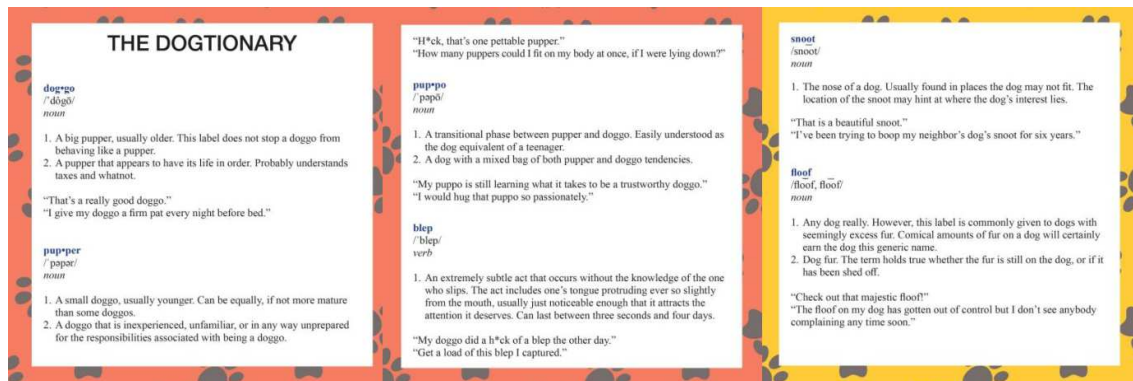
(via the #WeRateDogs book on Amazon)

Could those puppers be pulling at the heart string-leashes and leading us to the Retweet?

While not every Tweet includes a dog stage, of those that do, the vast majority are in the cute little *pupper* stage. However, of the 7 Tweets in the 20 most popular Tweets that mention a dog stage, 5 of those a *doggos*. The top 2 Tweets showcase *doggos*, which only account for about 1 quarter of the dog that were given a dog rating. Perhaps that part of the *doggo* definition "This does not stop a doggo from behaving like a pupper" is coming into play.
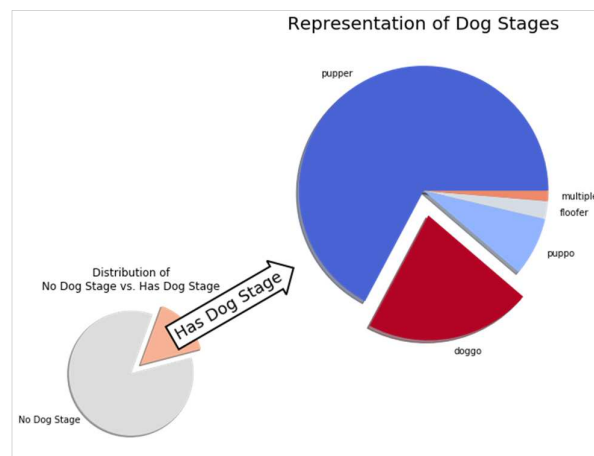
And the rating out of 10 is…

A clear pattern could not be defined for popular dog rating Tweets. Although *WeRateDogs* is known for its humour, the humorous Tweets are not necessarily the most popular. Similarly, known for giving out dog ratings, a high rating didn't necessarily coincide with popularity, especially since the vast majority of the dataset received a rating over 10. Other avenues were mostly inconclusive in explaining what makes a dog rating Tweet, and in turn *WeRateDogs* so popular. Perhaps the answer and secret to *WeRateDogs'* success has been staring at us all along….because

WeRateDogs™ ✓
@dog_rates

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Replying to @brant

they're good dogs Brent

12:05 PM - 12 Sep 2016

13,870 Retweets 47,529 Likes

166   14K   48K

Source: https://twitter.com/dog_rates/status/775410014383026176?lang=en