

Filtering Instagram Hashtags Through Crowdtagging and the HITS Algorithm

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Abstract—Instagram is a rich source for mining descriptive tags for images and multimedia in general. The tags–image pairs can be used to train automatic image annotation (AIA) systems in accordance with the learning by example paradigm. In previous studies, we had concluded that, on average, 20% of the Instagram hashtags are related to the actual visual content of the image they accompany, i.e., they are descriptive hashtags, while there are many irrelevant hashtags, i.e., stop-hashtags, that are used across totally different images just for gathering clicks and for searchability enhancement. In this paper, we present a novel methodology, based on the principles of collective intelligence that helps in locating those hashtags. In particular, we show that the application of a modified version of the well-known hyperlink-induced topic search (HITS) algorithm, in a crowdtagging context, provides an effective and consistent way for finding pairs of Instagram images and hashtags, which lead to representative and noise-free training sets for content-based image retrieval. As a proof of concept, we used the crowdsourcing platform *Figure-eight* to allow collective intelligence to be gathered in the form of tag selection (crowdtagging) for Instagram hashtags. The crowdtagging data of *Figure-eight* are used to form bipartite graphs in which the first type of nodes corresponds to the annotators and the second type to the hashtags they selected. The HITS algorithm is first used to rank the annotators in terms of their effectiveness in the crowdtagging task and then to identify the right hashtags per image.

Index Terms—Bipartite graphs, collective intelligence, crowdtagging, FolkRank, hyperlink-induced topic search (HITS) algorithm, image retrieval, image tagging, Instagram hashtags.

I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL media are online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration. These media give the users the opportunity to share their content such as text, video, and images [31]. Users usually accompany the content they post with text such as comments or hashtags. This alternative text (comment, hashtags, etc.) provides valuable information about the user posts and other information. Preece *et al.* [32] construct a Sentinel platform that can enhance social media data in order to understand different situations they based also in Youtube video comments. Sagduyu *et al.* [33] present a novel system that can present large-scale synthetic data from social media. In their system, they use textual content (hashtags and hyperlinks in tweets) to produce topics and train

the n-gram model. The users in several of those media, e.g. Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, use hashtags to annotate the digital content they upload. Hashtags are, usually, words or nonspaced phrases preceded by the symbol # that allow creators/content contributors to apply tagging that makes it easier for other users to locate their posts. A great portion of the digital content shared on social media platforms consists of images and short videos. Thus, effective retrieval of images from social media and the web, in general, becomes harder and more challenging day by day. Contemporary search engines are basically based on text descriptions to retrieve images; however, inaccurate text descriptions and the plethora of nontextually annotated images led to extended research for content-based image retrieval techniques [23].

The main problem of the content-based image retrieval is the so-called *semantic gap* [30], [35], [37], [42]: content-based retrieval is associated with low-level features while humans use high-level concepts for their search. To overcome this problem, automatic image annotation (AIA) methods were developed, that is, processes by which computing systems automatically assign metadata in the form of captions or keywords to images [4]. Among the AIA methods, those based on the learning by example paradigm are probably the most common one [21]. A small set of manually annotated training images are used to train models, which learn the correlation between image features and textual words (high-level concepts) and then allow automatic annotation of other (unseen) images. Obviously, good training examples, i.e., representative and accurate pairs of images and related tags are vital in this case [38]. Social media, and especially the Instagram, provide a rich source of image–tag pairs [8], [12]. Mining the right ones, automatically or semiautomatically, so as to be used as training examples is extremely important. We have to consider, however, that, in many cases, hashtags that accompany images in social media are not related with the image’s content but serve several other purposes such as the expression of user’s emotional state, the increase in user’s clicks and findability, and the beginning of a new communication or discussion [7].

In our previous research, we have shown that the percentage of the Instagram hashtags that describe the visual content of the image they are associated with does not exceed 25% [12]. We have also noticed that many Instagram hashtags are used across images that have nothing in common, just for searchability enhancement. We named those hashtags as *stophashtags* [13]. Thus, filtering the Instagram hashtags in terms of the visual content of the image they accompany is required. Hyperlink-induced topic search (HITS) is a ranking

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algorithm than we could use to filter Instagram hashtags and locate the most relevant. The purpose of the HITS algorithm, developed by Jon Kleinberg, is to rate webpages. The basic idea is that a webpage can provide information about a topic and also relevant links for a topic. Thus, webpages belong to two groups: pages that provide good information about a topic (“authoritative”) and those that give to the user good links about a topic (“hubs”). The HITS algorithm gives to each webpage both a hub and an authoritative value [27]. We have started experimenting with the HITS algorithm for mining informative Instagram hashtags in one of our previous works [14] and we extend this paper here by considering the application of the HITS algorithm in a real crowdtagging environment facilitated by the *Figure-eight*, formerly known as *Crowdfunder*, crowdsourcing platform. In addition, we have increased the number of annotations per image to 500, we formed the bipartite graphs for all images, and we calculated the performance of annotators across all those images. Moreover, FolkRank is used as a baseline to evaluate the performance of the proposed method.

II. RELATED WORK

The validity of crowdsourced image annotation was examined and verified by several researchers. Mitry *et al.* [28] compared the accuracy of crowdsourced image classification with that of experts. They used 100 retinal fundus photography images selected by two experts. Each annotator was asked to classify 84 retinal images while the ability of annotators to correctly classify those images was first evaluated on 16 practice-training images. The study concluded that the performance of naive individuals to retinal image classifications was comparable to that of experts. Giuffrida *et al.* [15] measured the inconsistency among experienced and nonexperienced users in that task of leaf counts in images of *Arabidopsis Thaliana*. According to their results, everyday people can provide accurate leaf counts. Maier-Hein *et al.* [25] investigated the effectiveness of large-scale crowdsourcing on labeling endoscopic images and concluded that nontrained workers perform comparably to medical experts. Cabral *et al.* [3] used the crowd to annotate driving scene features such as the presence of other road users and bicycles and pedestrians for drive scene categorization. They used the Crowdfunder platform (now *Figure-eight*) in the categorization of large amounts of videos with diverse driving scene contents. As usual, the Gold Test Questions in Crowdfunder were used to verify that the annotators perform well in their job. The results indicated that crowdsourcing through the Crowdfunder was effective in categorizing naturalistic driving scene contents.

The initial purpose of the HITS algorithm was to discover and rate webpages that are relevant to a topic (see also Section III-C). In social network analysis, the HITS algorithm, and specifically the hub and authority values it computes, is used for estimating the centrality of nodes, especially in networks composed of two types of nodes known as two-mode networks. A typical example of such networks is the bipartite networks that are usually modeled through bipartite graphs. A bipartite graph is a graph whose nodes can be divided into two distinctive groups (partitions) while

its edges connect nodes among partitions but not within each partition [10], [11].

Two-mode (bipartite) networks are frequently used to model recommender systems [43] since consumers and products correspond to two different types of entities and usually the consumers choose or rate products. Mao *et al.* [26] applied HITS (and the PageRank as well) to improve user profiling in a social tagging system. The purpose of user profiling is to understand and code the personal interests of users so as to provide advanced and personalized services. They modeled the social tagging system as a user-tag network and applied PageRank and HITS to refine the weights of tags. A diffusion process on the tag-item bipartite graph of the collection was then applied by using the estimated tag weights. The experiments, conducted on three different data sets, showed superiority of the proposed method over the traditional tag-based collaborative filtering approach that is usually adopted in recommender systems.

Zhang *et al.* [47] tried to extract people’s opinions on features (characteristics) of electronic products such as mobile phones, tablets, and so on. In order to rank the importance of those characteristics, they constructed a two-mode network where features were modeled as authorities and feature relevance indicators as hubs. With the aid of the HITS algorithm, they were able to identify highly relevant features and good feature indicators by thresholding the corresponding authority and hub values, respectively. Tri and Jung [40] used a variation of the HITS algorithm, called GeoHITS, to rank locations with respect to specific tags such as those related with food types. Both tags and locations were collected from geotagged resources on social network services. The authors used a subset of tags that shared across several locations to act as hubs while the locations were considered as the authorities.

Cui *et al.* [6] proposed a healthcare fraud detection approach that is based on the trustworthiness of doctors to distinguish fraud cases from normal records. They created a doctor-patient two-mode network that was represented as a weighted bipartite graph. The prescription behavior in patients’ healthcare records was used to compute the edge weights. According to the authors, the hub scores of the HITS algorithm provide a good estimation of the trustworthiness of doctors. London and Csentesi [22] applied a modified version of the HITS algorithm called Co-HITS to evaluate the professional skills of wine tasters. In order to achieve this goal, they constructed a weighted bipartite graph composed of wine tasters, modeled as hubs, and wines, modeled as authorities. The weights correspond to the scores given by the wine tasters to wines. According to the authors, the computed hub values can be used to filter out incompetent tasters while they are highly correlated with the competence of wine tasters.

Tseng *et al.* [44] tried to distinguish fraudulent remote phone calls from normal ones by considering that the trust value of remote phone numbers is related to the hub score of the HITS algorithm. For that purpose, they used telecommunication records to create directed bipartite graphs with incoming and outgoing calls between contact book entries of the users, assumed as authorities, and remote phone numbers (phone numbers not in contact books), assumed as hubs. The edge weights for each pair of user and remote phone

number were computed based on duration and frequency relatedness between a user and a remote phone number. With the application of HITS, the trust value for each remote phone number was computed and used to classify remote calls into fraudulent and normal.

There are also a few works in which the HITS algorithm was used in a crowdsourced environment, as we do in this paper for the specific case of image tagging. However, in the majority of cases, the emphasis is put on the evaluation–enhancement of the quality of the crowdsourced data rather than to information mining. Sunahase *et al.* [36] applied the so-called pairwise HITS algorithm, a modification of the HITS algorithm which is applicable to pairwise comparisons, to three different tasks: image description, logo designing, and article language translation. The aim was to estimate the quality of produced data and the ability of evaluators to assess those data through pairwise comparisons of image descriptions, logo designs, and article translations created by two different creators–data producers. Schall *et al.* [34] tried to evaluate crowdsourcing participants (coordinators, supervisors, and workers) used for business process. They created a two-mode social graph for each coordinator that processes a task from a customer. Supervisors, which separate the task into subtasks, and workers that perform the task, correspond to the two types of entities that compose the bipartite graph. The authority score is used to rank the performance of workers, while the hub score is used to rank the effectiveness of supervisors to assign the right task to the right workers. Aydin *et al.* [2] tried to find the right answers to multiple-choice questions that had been aggregated from the crowd for the game “who wants to be a millionaire?” They created a big bipartite graph composed by multiple-choice answers, assumed as authorities, and users, assumed as hubs. The computed hub scores, through the HITS algorithm, of the users were used as weights in a weighted voting scheme that predicts the right answer of a multiple-choice question. The authors claimed a significantly increased accuracy of right prediction on the harder questions that are posed at the end of the game while the overall accuracy of prediction reaches 95%.

The structure of tuples {user, item, tags} in tagging systems has been termed folksonomy, being composed of folk, i.e., the users of the tagging system, and a taxonomy, i.e., a hierarchy is built from an “is-a” relationship. Traditional ranking algorithms such as the PageRank and HITS were proposed for ranking folksonomies [16]. However, the fact that folksonomies are composed of three different types of entities and, therefore, can only be modeled as tripartite graphs, makes the direct application of those algorithms for ranking folksonomies problematic. As a result, several modifications of the original PageRank and HITS algorithms were proposed. The FolkRank [17] is one of the algorithms that are based on the PageRank algorithm while a modification, called *differential FolkRank*, appropriate for ranking folksonomies that are modeled as undirected tripartite graphs was also proposed by the same authors [18]. We further discuss this algorithm in Section III-D.

We have seen in the previous paragraphs that the HITS algorithm has been successfully applied in real-world problems

that can be modeled through bipartite graphs. At the same time, crowdsourced image annotation is gaining popularity through the wide use of dedicated crowdsourcing platforms. However, the problem of crowdsourced image tagging has never been modeled as a two-mode network probably because it involves three different types of entities: annotators, images, and tags. We overcome the three-entity problem by applying the HITS algorithm in two consecutive steps and on two different bipartite graphs. We first estimate the reliability of annotators (contributors in the language of *Figure-eight*) by utilizing the hub value of the full bipartite graph consisting of the annotators and the tags they selected and used across all images. Then, the annotator hub values are used as tie-weights on bipartite graphs constructed per Instagram image. The authority values of the tags, computed through the HITS algorithm, give us a ranking in terms of relevance between the hashtags and the image they accompany and are used to filter out the relevant from the irrelevant hashtags.

There are different approaches in tag filtering including the work of Xia *et al.* [46], in which they propose a bilayer clustering framework to locate relevant tags to social images. In the first layer, they try to locate relevant tags and images. In the second layer, the image groups are divided into smaller using affinity propagation. Then, they calculate the frequency of tags and relevance to keep only the relevant tags. Wang *et al.* [45] inspired by the topic model and deep learning propose a novel method called regularized latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) to filters tags. In the deep learning model, they use four layers combining tags and image features. Argyrou *et al.* [1] used LDA model to retrieve the relevant Instagram hashtags that are related to the content of the image and can be used for AIA. Based on hashtags from a sample of 1000 Instagram, the researchers trained an LDA model.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this section, we present the problem and describe the methodology we follow to solve it along with the main concepts formulated within this methodology, and we explain the data we used in our experiments along with the data collection procedure.

A. Problem Formulation

Let us assume an Instagram image I_j and the set $\mathcal{T}^j = \{t_1^j, t_2^j, \dots, t_k^j, \dots, t_{K_j}^j\}$ of K_j hashtags that accompany it (see Fig. 1 for an example). We denote by r_k^j the relevance of hashtag t_k^j with the visual content of image I_j . We assume that the relevance scores $R[t_k^j]$, $k = 1, 2, \dots, K_j$, $j = 1, 2, \dots, M$ are computed with the aid of a crowd of N annotators (crowdtagers) as explained in Section III-E.

The aim of this paper is to create a ranked set of tags for each one of the Instagram images I_j in terms of their relevance with its visual content, such as

$$\mathcal{T}_r^j = \{t_{r,1}^j, t_{r,2}^j, \dots, t_{r,k}^j, \dots, t_{r,k+1}^j, \dots, t_{r,K_j}^j\} \quad (1)$$

where $R[t_{r,k}^j] > R[t_{r,k+1}^j]$.



Fig. 1. Example of an instagram image: at the top right, the associated hashtags are attached to it.

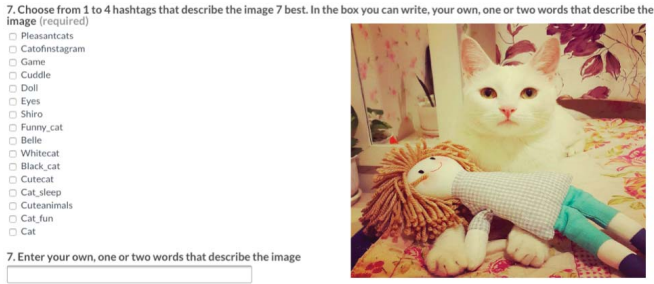


Fig. 2. Example of hashtag selection process that took place via Figure-eight.

B. Methodology

We assume that a set $\mathcal{I} = \{I_1, I_2, \dots, I_M\}$ of M Instagram images along with their associated hashtags $\mathcal{T} = \{\mathcal{T}^1, \mathcal{T}^2, \dots, \mathcal{T}^j, \dots, \mathcal{T}^M\}$ crawled according to the procedure described in Section III-E. The methodology we follow to solve the problem mentioned in Section III-A consists of the following steps. For the convenience of the readers who are interested to rerun the process, a detailed Python code is given in the Appendix.

- 1) *Step 1*: The relevance $R[t_k^j]$, $k = 1, 2, \dots, K_j$ of each hashtag with respect to the visual content of the associated image I_j is assessed by a set $\mathcal{U} = \{u_1, u_2, \dots, u_N\}$ of N users (annotators) with the aid of a crowdsourcing platform, as shown in Fig. 2.
- 2) *Step 2*: Given that all users assessed all image hashtags, we can rank their effectiveness by considering the HITS algorithm. For that purpose, we construct a bipartite graph

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{B} &= \{\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}\} \\ \mathcal{V} &= \mathcal{V}_U \cup \mathcal{V}_T \\ \mathcal{V}_U \cap \mathcal{V}_T &= \emptyset \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where \mathcal{V}_U and \mathcal{V}_T are the sets of vertices corresponding to the annotators and hashtags, respectively, while $\mathcal{E} = \{e_{ik}^j\}$ is the set of edges denoting that the i th

user-selected (considered as visually relevant) tag t_k^j of image I_j .

- 3) *Step 3*: The effectiveness (reliability) of annotators is approximated with the set of hub values $\mathcal{H} = \{h[v_1], h[v_2], \dots, h[v_i], \dots, h[v_N]\}$, where $h[v_i]$ is the hub value of vertex $v_i \in \mathcal{V}_U$, computed with the aid of the HITS algorithm (see also Section III-C).
- 4) *Step 4*: For each image I_j , we construct a weighted bipartite graph as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{B}^j &= \{\mathcal{V}^j, \mathcal{E}^j\} \\ \mathcal{V}^j &= \mathcal{V}_U \cup \mathcal{V}_T^j \\ \mathcal{V}_U \cap \mathcal{V}_T^j &= \emptyset \\ \mathcal{E}^j &= \{(v_i, v_k, h[v_i]) | v_i \in \mathcal{V}_U, v_k \in \mathcal{V}_T^j, h[v_i] \in \mathcal{H}\} \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where \mathcal{V}_U is the set of vertices corresponding to the annotators, \mathcal{V}_T^j is the set of vertices corresponding to the hashtags of the j th image, and \mathcal{E}^j is the set of weighted edges denoting that the i th user-selected (considered as visually relevant) tag t_k^j of image I_j .

Fig. 3 shows, for better visualization, the k -core¹ ($k = 6$) of the bipartite graph corresponding to image 7 (the one shown in Fig. 2). The radius of each tag is analogous to the weighted degree of the corresponding vertex. The whole bipartite graph for image 7 consists of 607 vertices: 499 annotators (users), 16 hashtags of image 7, and another 92 tags suggested by the annotators.

- 5) *Step 5*: A ranked set of tags, $\mathcal{T}_r^j = \{t_{r,1}^j, t_{r,2}^j, \dots, t_{r,k}^j, t_{r,k+1}^j, \dots, t_{r,K_j}^j\}$, for each Instagram image I_j is achieved through the set of authority values $\mathcal{A}^j = \{a^j[v_1], a^j[v_2], \dots, a^j[v_k], a^j[v_{k+1}], \dots, a^j[v_{K_j}]\}$, where $a^j[v_k]$ is the authority value of vertex $v_k \in \mathcal{V}_T^j$, computed with the aid of the HITS algorithm when it is applied on the weighted bipartite graphs that were created in the previous step.

¹<https://networkx.github.io/documentation/stable/reference/algorithms/core.html>

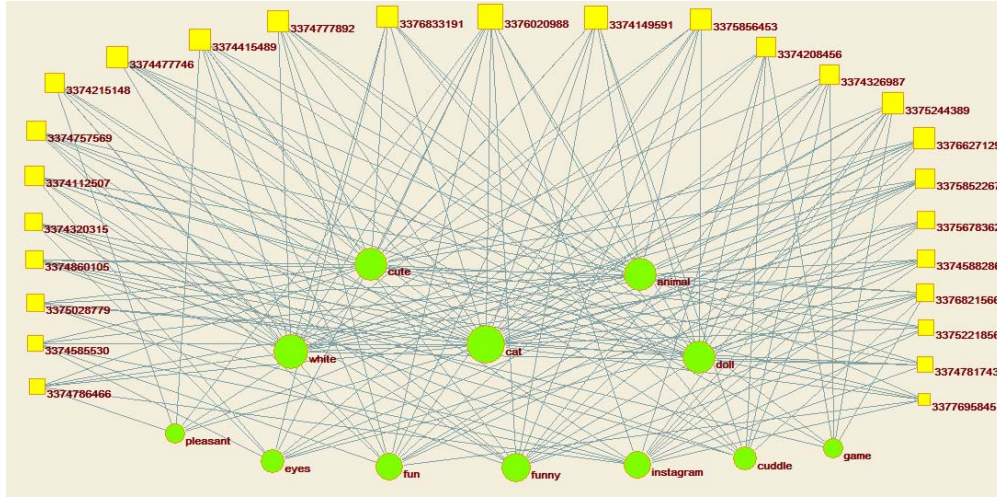


Fig. 3. Subgraph of user-tag bipartite network for image #7. Circles: tags. Boxes: annotators that selected those tags.

TABLE I
AUTHORITY AND HUB VALUES FOR THE BIPARTITE NETWORK
OF IMAGE #7 (SEE ALSO FIG. 3)—ONLY THE 16 MOST
RELIABLE ANNOTATORS ARE SHOWN

Hashtag	Authority	Annotator ID	Hub ($\times 10^{-2}$)
cat	0.2027	3376020988	0.5582
doll	0.1314	3374149591	0.5163
white	0.1264	3374415489	0.4872
cute	0.1171	3374112507	0.4806
animal	0.0635	3374477746	0.4680
funny	0.0621	3376833191	0.4563
eyes	0.0471	3375771052	0.4556
instagram	0.0434	3375856453	0.4513
fun	0.0389	3374757569	0.4489
game	0.0279	3374777892	0.4256
pleasant	0.0267	3374647452	0.4037
cuddle	0.0256	3374505202	0.4029
belle	0.0092	3376453894	0.3996
shiro	0.0077	3374248101	0.3981
sleep	0.0060	3375852267	0.3976
black	0.0040	3374781743	0.3964

Table I gives the authority values for the hashtags associated with image 7 along with the hub values of the 16 most reliable annotators (for this specific image) after the application of the proposed methodology.

C. HITS Algorithm in Bipartite and Weighted Bipartite Graphs

The HITS algorithm was initially introduced in [19] and [20] in order to analyze a collection of webpages, relevant to a topic, and locate the most “authoritative” ones in that topic. It performs link analysis on those webpages in order to rank them in terms of two measures: hub value and authoritativeness. The authority score estimates the importance of the content of the page, while the hub score estimates the quality of its links to other pages. Thus, a webpage that has many inlinks from other pages with high hub value is considered an authority, while a page with many outlinks to high authority webpages is a hub [29], [41]. In simple words, the main principle of the HITS algorithm is that an informed hub points

to many effective authorities, and an effective authority is pointed out by many informed hubs. Thus, authorities and hubs have a mutual reinforcement relationship [9].

As already discussed in the Introduction, the HITS algorithm is commonly used for the analysis of two-mode networks represented as bipartite graphs. In that case, both authority and hub values are used as measures of centrality²; however, their interpretation differs significantly. A vertex with high authority score is considered as an expert, while a vertex with high hub value is assumed as a good recommender. The authority $a[v]$ and hub value $h[v]$ of a vertex v in a bipartite graph are (iteratively) computed with the aid of the following equations:

$$a[v] = \sum_{v_i \in \mathcal{N}_{v,U}} h[v_i]$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{v,U} = \{v_i | v_i \in \mathcal{V}_U, (v_i, v) \in \mathcal{E}\} \quad (4)$$

$$h[v] = \sum_{v_i \in \mathcal{N}_{v,T}} a[v_i]$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{v,T} = \{v_i | v_i \in \mathcal{V}_T, (v, v_i) \in \mathcal{E}\} \quad (5)$$

where $\mathcal{N}_{v,U}$ is the set of vertices in \mathcal{V}_U that point to vertex v and $\mathcal{N}_{v,T}$ is the set of vertices in \mathcal{V}_T that vertex v points to [see also (2)].

It can be seen in (4) and (5) that a vertex’s authority value is the sum of the hub score of all vertices pointing to it while its hub value is the sum of authority scores of all vertices that it points to. The final hub–authority values of a vertex are determined after infinite repetitions of the algorithm but, in practice, typical convergence tests, based on the number of iterations or the change of hub–authority scores between consecutive iterations, are applied. Given that directly and iteratively applying the above-mentioned equations leads to diverging values, it is necessary to normalize hub and authority values after every iteration so as to sum to 1, i.e., $\sum_v h[v] = 1$, $\sum_v a[v] = 1$. By definition, the initial values of $a[p]$ and $h[p]$ are set to 1.

²<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centrality>

TABLE II
RECALL, PRECISION, AND F_1 -MEASURE SCORES FOR $M = 50$ IMAGES AND VARIOUS THRESHOLD VALUES WITH RESPECT TO AUTHORITY SCORE (HITS), $_trust$ WEIGHTING, AND FOLKRANK RANKING SCORE

		Authority threshold value θ / FolkRank ranking score threshold value										
Algorithm	($M=50, N=499$)	0.25	0.21	0.17	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.05	0.03	0.01
HITS AUC = 0.692	Recall (R)	0.136	0.223	0.359	0.440	0.527	0.620	0.679	0.712	0.766	0.804	0.842
	Precision (P)	0.962	0.932	0.904	0.862	0.822	0.755	0.654	0.604	0.504	0.396	0.265
	F_1 -measure (F)	0.238	0.360	0.514	0.583	0.642	0.681	0.667	0.653	0.608	0.530	0.403
FolkRank AUC = 0.689	Recall (R)	0.158	0.261	0.370	0.424	0.504	0.603	0.663	0.707	0.755	0.804	0.832
	Precision (P)	0.935	0.923	0.895	0.876	0.823	0.766	0.709	0.613	0.529	0.418	0.277
	F_1 -measure (F)	0.270	0.407	0.523	0.571	0.626	0.675	0.685	0.657	0.622	0.550	0.415
$_trust$ AUC = 0.680	Recall (R)	0.168	0.272	0.353	0.424	0.527	0.609	0.652	0.696	0.739	0.798	0.856
	Precision (P)	0.929	0.903	0.877	0.847	0.813	0.772	0.698	0.601	0.517	0.412	0.267
	F_1 -measure (F)	0.286	0.418	0.504	0.565	0.640	0.681	0.674	0.645	0.609	0.543	0.407

TABLE III
RECALL, PRECISION, AND F_1 -MEASURE SCORES FOR $M = 50$ IMAGES AND VARIOUS VALUES OF THE TOP RANKED HASHTAGS BASED ON THE AUTHORITY SCORE

		Number of mined hashtags kept (k)										
($M=50, N=499$)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Recall (R)		0.234	0.467	0.603	0.685	0.750	0.772	0.808	0.815	0.837	0.842	0.848
Precision (P)		0.862	0.858	0.740	0.630	0.552	0.473	0.426	0.375	0.342	0.310	0.284
F_1 -measure (F)		0.368	0.605	0.665	0.656	0.636	0.587	0.558	0.514	0.486	0.453	0.425

For weighted undirected bipartite graphs \mathcal{B}^j , such as those corresponding to a user–tag bipartite network for a specific image I_j [see (3)], the equations of the HITS algorithm are modified as follows:

$$a^j[v] = \sum_{v_i \in \mathcal{N}_{v,U}^j} h[v_i] \cdot h^j[v_i]$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{v,U}^j = \{v_i | v_i \in \mathcal{V}_U, (v_i, v, h[v_i]) \in \mathcal{E}^j\} \quad (6)$$

$$h^j[v] = \sum_{v_i \in \mathcal{N}_{v,T}^j} h[v_i] \cdot a^j[v_i]$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{v,T}^j = \{v_i | v_i \in \mathcal{V}_T, (v, v_i, h[v_i]) \in \mathcal{E}^j\} \quad (7)$$

where $\mathcal{N}_{v,U}^j$ is the set of vertices in \mathcal{V}_U that point to vertex v and $\mathcal{N}_{v,T}^j$ is the set of vertices in \mathcal{V}_T that vertex v points to [see also (3)].

D. Folksonomies and the FolkRank Algorithm

While our approach is a modification of the HITS algorithm to handle {user, images, hashtags} folksonomies, the FolkRank [17] is a known modification of the PageRank algorithm toward this direction. FolkRank makes use of the personalization component of the PageRank algorithm and applies single-entity optimization. By doing so, the Folk rank is capable of handling the inherent difficulty to adapt a single-entity ranking algorithm (PageRank) to a three-entity structure (folksonomy). An additional difficulty coming from the fact folksonomies are usually modeled as undirected graphs, i.e., humans select tags for an item. In order to handle this problem, Hotho *et al.* [18] proposed a modified version of the FolkRank algorithm, called *differential FolkRank*. It is this algorithm that is used for comparison with the proposed method in Section IV-A.

E. Data Collection, Crowdtagging, and Software Tools

A set of 50 Instagram images, along with their hashtags, was automatically crawled with the aid of a Python³ program (see [12] for more details on the crawling process). The collected Instagram images were uploaded to *Figure-eight* for crowdtagging in the form of tag selection as indicated in Fig. 3 for image #7. To simplify the process, all hashtag choices were presented to the annotators as checkboxes. The annotators were invited to select 1–4 hashtags and were given also the opportunity to provide their own tags. Despite these guidelines, many annotators select much more than 4 tags, and in several cases, the extra tags they provided were already among the given choices. Therefore, duplicate tags for the same image were identified and removed. Another important preprocessing step was the splitting of hashtags into their constituting words with the help of the *wordsegment*⁴ Python library. For instance, the hashtag *#picoftheday* is decomposed into the words *pic*, *of*, *the*, and *day*.

Every image was annotated by 500 annotators for experimentation purposes. In practice, much fewer annotations per image are enough while there is absolutely no reason that all images must be assessed by all annotators. Nevertheless, we made those choices to allow us to generalize the conclusions of our study as much possible. One of the annotators turned out to be dishonest as indicated by the $_trust$ value of *Figure-eight* as well as by the corresponding hub value of the HITS algorithm when it was applied on the full bipartite graph (2), and she/he was excluded from the experiments. The comparison between hub values and $_trust$ scores is given in Section IV-A. The full bipartite graph and the bipartite graphs per image were constructed and analyzed with help of the

³<https://www.python.org/>

⁴<http://www.grantjenks.com/docs/wordsegment/>

NetworkX⁵ library of Python. We also used the NetworkX implementation of the HITS algorithm to extract the overall hub values (reliability scores for the annotators) and authority scores of the tags of each image.

F. Evaluation Framework

The 50-Instagram-image questionnaire was given to the *Figure-eight* annotators. In addition, two image retrieval experts have access to the same data set. The annotations of the experts, aggregated together and preprocessed in the same way as the crowdsourced data, consist our gold standard across which the effectiveness of the proposed methodology is evaluated through the measures defined in the following. In total, 145 different tags were proposed by the experts for the 50 images. On the other hand, the 499 annotators proposed a total of 2571 different tags. However, only 135 of the tags proposed by the experts were also proposed by the annotators.

Let us denote with $\mathcal{G} = \{\mathcal{G}^1, \mathcal{G}^2, \dots, \mathcal{G}^M\}$ the set of hashtags in the gold standard set, where \mathcal{G}^j is the gold standard set for the j th image. Let us also denote with $\mathcal{T}_{r,\theta}^j = \{t_{r,1}^j, t_{r,2}^j, \dots, t_{r,k}^j\}$ the ordered set of tags for image I_j such that $a^j[t_{r,1}^j] \geq a^j[t_{r,2}^j] \geq \dots \geq a^j[t_{r,m}^j] \dots \geq a^j[t_{r,k}^j]$ and $a^j[t_{r,k}^j] > \theta$, where $a^j[t_{r,m}^j]$ is the authority value of the vertex of bipartite graph \mathcal{B}^j corresponding to the tag $t_{r,m}^j$.

The recall value $R_{j,\theta}$ for image I_j at the authority threshold value θ , i.e., the portion of tags in the gold standard set that was identified by the HITS algorithm when only the annotator tags with authority score higher than θ were kept, is given by

$$R_{j,\theta} = \frac{\|\mathcal{T}_{r,\theta}^j \cap \mathcal{G}^j\|}{\|\mathcal{G}^j\|} \quad (8)$$

where \cap denotes the set intersection operation and $\|\Omega\|$ refers to the cardinality of set Ω .

In a similar manner, we define the precision value $P_{j,\theta}$ for image I_j at the authority threshold value θ , as the portion of the tags that were identified by the HITS algorithm that is included in the gold standard set of image I_j

$$P_{j,\theta} = \frac{\|\mathcal{T}_{r,\theta}^j \cap \mathcal{G}^j\|}{\|\mathcal{T}_{r,\theta}^j\|}. \quad (9)$$

With the aid of (8) and (9), we can compute the recall, precision, and F_1 -measure, at the authority threshold value θ , for the whole image data set as follows:

$$R_\theta = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{j=1}^M R_{j,\theta} \quad (10)$$

$$P_\theta = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{j=1}^M P_{j,\theta} \quad (11)$$

$$F_{1,\theta} = \frac{2 \cdot P_\theta \cdot R_\theta}{P_\theta + R_\theta}. \quad (12)$$

TABLE IV

AVERAGE PRECISION AND MRR FOR IMAGE #6 HASHTAGS ACCORDING TO AUTHORITY SCORE RANK (ASR)

Hashtag	In Gold Standard	ASR	Precision	RR
vacation		1	0	
beach	x	2	1/2 (0.500)	1/2 (0.500)
sand	x	3	2/3 (0.667)	1/3 (0.333)
sun		4	0	0
bikini	x	5	3/5 (0.600)	1/5 (0.200)
sea	x			
sky	x			
woman	x			
hat	x			
Sum			1.767	1.033
Average			0.589	0.344

TABLE V

MAP AND MRR FOR $M = 50$ IMAGES

	Mean	Min	Max
Average Precision	0.89	0.51	1.00
Reciprocal Rank	0.52	0.16	1.00

The effectiveness of the proposed method is also evaluated with the aid of mean reciprocal rank (MRR) [5]. The MRR of an image I_j is computed as follows:

$$\text{MRR}_j = \frac{1}{\|\mathcal{T}_r^j \cap \mathcal{G}^j\|} \sum_{i=1, t_{r,i}^j \in \mathcal{G}^j}^{K_j} \frac{1}{r_i^j} \quad (13)$$

where $\mathcal{T}_r^j = \{t_{r,1}^j, t_{r,2}^j, \dots, t_{r,K_j}^j\}$ is the ordered set of tags for image I_j , \mathcal{G}^j is the corresponding gold standard set, and r_i^j is the ranking of tag $t_{r,i}^j$.

The MRR is computed as the average of MRR_j across all images.

Another key performance metric in information retrieval is mean average precision (MAP). The purpose of MAP is to calculate the average of the precision value of the top set of k results. It is defined as follows:

$$\text{MAP}_j = \frac{1}{\|\mathcal{T}_r^j \cap \mathcal{G}^j\|} \sum_{k=1}^{K_j} \frac{\|\mathcal{T}_{r,k}^j \cap \mathcal{G}^j\|}{\|\mathcal{T}_{r,k}^j\|} \quad (14)$$

where $\mathcal{T}_{r,k}^j = \{t_{r,1}^j, t_{r,2}^j, \dots, t_{r,k}^j\}$ is the ordered set of the k first tags of image I_j .

A practical example of how the MAP and MRR scores are computed is given in Table IV for the particular case of image #6.

IV. RESULTS

The precision, recall, and F_1 measure, as defined in (10)–(12), were computed for a variety of authority threshold values θ and are presented in Table II. Moreover, we present the MAP and MRR results according to (13)–(14) in Table V. The corresponding receiver operating characteristic curves⁶ (ROC) are shown in Fig. 4. For convenient juxtaposition with the values presented in Table II, in this ROC curve,

⁵<https://networkx.github.io/>

⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Receiver_operating_characteristic

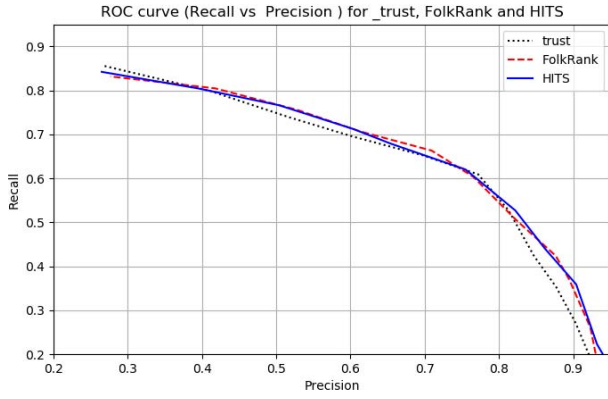


Fig. 4. Recall versus precision ROC curves for the *_trust* (AUC = 0.680), the FolkRank (AUC = 0.689), and the HITS (AUC = 0.692) weighting schemes.

the precision versus recall is plotted instead of the typical case of ROC curves in which the true positive rate versus the false positive rate are usually plotted. We observe in both Table II and Fig. 4 that the best results in terms of the F_1 measure are obtained for an authority score threshold value $\theta = 0.11$. However, as in most information retrieval systems, we usually prefer a higher value of recall that is identifying more tags even if it is not that accurate, instead of precision. Thus, an authority score threshold $\theta = 0.09$ also gives us a reasonable choice.

With a MAP score equal to 0.891 (see Table V), we can conclude that applying the HITS algorithm for the selection of the appropriate hashtags, for Instagram images, in a crowdsourcing environment is at least promising. Since MAP ranges $[0, 1]$ and the result is close to 1, we can conclude that the algorithm located almost all the relevant hashtags of the collection. Another indication that the proposed methodology is suitable for locating relevant hashtags is the MRR results (see also Table V). Values for MRR range from 0 to 1 with higher values signify that the relevant hashtags are ranked higher. Thus, $MRR = 0.5$ corresponds to the correct hashtags being in the top two returned by the HITS algorithm.

Another important metric that is used to evaluate the performance of information retrieval systems is the area under the (ROC) curve (AUC or AUROC). Since both precision and recall take values in the range $[0, 1]$, AUC also ranges in $[0, 1]$. The intuition behind this metric is that an AUC of 0.5 represents a random information retrieval system (or, similarly, an uninformative two-class classifier), while an AUC equal to 1 represents the perfect information retrieval system. The AUC corresponding to the ROC curve of Fig. 4 is equal to 0.692. As we show in the Appendix (Step 6), the computation was done with the aid of the *metrics*⁷ Python library of *Sklearn*.⁸

In [12], we concluded that, on average, four of the hashtags accompanying each Instagram image are related to its visual content. This conclusion was in line with the findings of Ferrara *et al.* [8] who studied users' behavior while they annotate their photos with hashtags and concluded that users use quite a few hashtags in order to annotate image content.

⁷<https://scikit-learn.org/stable/modules/generated/sklearn.metrics.auc.html>

⁸<https://scikit-learn.org/stable/>

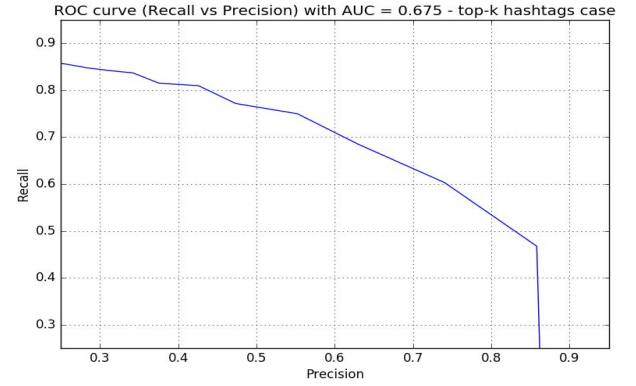


Fig. 5. Recall versus precision ROC curve with an AUC equal to 0.675—the case of top- k hashtags.

In order to verify these findings, we also evaluated, again with the aid of the gold standard set, the effectiveness of hashtags' selection through the HITS algorithm by keeping the k top-ranked hashtags per image based on their authority scores. The results, for a variety of k values, are given in Table III while the corresponding ROC curve is shown in Fig. 5. We see that the best F_1 scores are achieved by keeping either the top three or the top four ranked hashtags per image. Keeping four hashtags per image favors the recall value which, as already discussed above, is preferable for the majority of information retrieval systems. We see also in Fig. 5 that the AUC is 0.675, which is comparable with the authority score thresholding case. This means that there is no significant variation of the agreed hashtags per image; therefore, keeping the k top-ranked hashtags based on the authority score is another option for mining tags from Instagram hashtags accompanying images.

A. Reliability Measures for the Annotators

Figure-eight, as many other crowdsourcing platforms, provides its own measure to identify dishonest annotators. In particular, it uses the *_trust* variable that is computed on a subset of the data, known as gold test questions, for which the creators provide the correct answers and which is considered as a type of gold standard. In our case, an additional set of Instagram images corresponding to 10% of the data was assessed (crowdtaged) by the creators. The performance of each one of the annotators is the recall value of the tags used by the creators that the annotator correctly identified.

As already mentioned, in the proposed method, the reliability of the annotators is estimated with the aid of the hub value computed on the full graph composed from all images and all tags [see (5)]. Therefore, the annotators reliability is based on the total number of images for hub value in contrast to the calculated one for all the *_trust* values that are based on 10% of the data. In Table VI, we present the hub values of the top 10 reliable annotators based on our method along with the corresponding *_trust* value as computed by *Figure-eight*. In the same table, we also show the corresponding ranking of the differential FolkRank algorithm. While the rankings

TABLE VI

TOP 10 USERS ACCORDING TO THE HUB VALUE ALONG WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING RANKING BASED ON *Figure-Eight's* *_trust* VALUE

User ID	hub value $\times 10^{-2}$	hub based ranking	FolkRank value $\times 10^{-2}$	FolkRank ranking	<i>_trust</i> value	<i>_trust</i> based ranking
xx7892	0.3195	1	0.1444	1	0.6665	490
xx5795	0.3060	2	0.1372	2	0.7104	462
xx7746	0.3045	3	0.1363	3	0.6688	487
xx9591	0.3020	4	0.1350	4	0.6504	496
xx8610	0.2964	5	0.1320	5	0.7308	419
xx3452	0.2939	6	0.1306	6	0.6547	493
xx0988	0.2931	7	0.1302	7	0.6351	497
xx1052	0.2912	8	0.1291	8	0.7306	422
xx8286	0.2909	9	0.1290	9	0.7367	404
xx2687	0.2888	10	0.1278	10	0.7402	389

of annotators based on the hub scores and the FolkRank algorithm are identical, as they both based on the same principle, we observe large differences between them and the *_trust* values (fifth column) of *Figure-eight*. In fact, the *_trust* values, of the top 10 annotators based on the hub scores and FolkRank, are below the average *_trust* value (0.7675), and in almost all cases, the corresponding ranking is in the last 100. We remind here that the total number of annotators is $N = 499$.

We also observe that by examining the extreme values of hub and *_trust*, the hub scores provide a more subtle diversification than the *_trust* scores. Therefore, our choice to weight the bipartite graphs for each image [see (6)] with the hub scores of the full bipartite graph rather than the *_trust* values seems justified. However, in order to empirically check this assumption, we repeated our experiments by using as weights in the bipartite graphs for each image of the *_trust* scores of the annotators. The results are summarized in Table II and illustrated in Fig. 4. We see a quite similar performance in terms of the F_1 metric although some differentiation between recall and precision for the same values of the authority threshold θ do exist. The AUC achieved when using the *_trust* scores to weight the bipartite graphs is 0.680, not very much lower than that of the hub score weighting of the bipartite graphs. We further discuss this finding in Section V.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have presented an innovative methodology, based on the HITS algorithm and the principles of collective intelligence, for the identification of Instagram hashtags that describe the visual content of the images they are associated with. We have empirically shown that the application of a two-step HITS algorithm in a crowdtagging context provides an easy and effective way to locate pairs of Instagram images and hashtags that can be used as training sets for content-based image retrieval systems in the learning by example paradigm. As a proof of concept, we have used 25000 evaluations (500 annotations for each one of 50 images) collected from the *Figure-eight* crowdsourcing platform to create a bipartite graph composed of users (annotators) and the tags they selected to describe the 50 images. The hub scores of the HITS

algorithm applied to this graph, called hereby full bipartite graph, give us a measure of the reliability of the annotators. The aforementioned approach is based on the findings of Theodosiou *et al.* [39], in which the reliability of annotators is better approximated if we consider all the annotations they have performed rather than the subset of gold test questions. In the second step, a weighted bipartite graph for each image is composed in the same way as the full bipartite graph. The weights of these graphs are the hub scores computed in the previous step. By thresholding the authority scores of the per image graphs, obtained by the application of the HITS algorithm on the weighted graphs, we can rank and then effectively locate the hashtags that are relevant to their visual content as per the annotators evaluation.

Some important findings of this paper are briefly summarized here. The first refers to the value of crowdtagging itself. In several studies before, we found that the crowd can substitute the experts in the evaluation of images with respect to relevant tags. However, even with a large number of annotators (499 in our case), it seems that a perfect agreement between annotators and experts cannot be achieved. In particular, it was found that from the 145 different tags suggested for the 50 images used in this paper by the two experts, only 135 were also identified by the 499 annotators. This leads to a maximum achievable recall value equal to 0.931. Thus, in subjective evaluation tasks, such as those referring to the identification of tags that are related to the visual content of images, no perfect agreement between the experts and the crowd should be expected.

A second finding is that crowdtagging of images can be effectively modeled through user-tag bipartite graphs, one per image. Thresholding the authority score of the HITS algorithm applied on these graphs is a robust way to identify the tags that characterize the visual content of the corresponding images. Getting the top ranked tags based on the authority score is an alternative solution, but, with a little bit lower effectiveness.

A final remark of this paper refers to the importance of using weighted user-tag bipartite graphs for the crowdtagged images. It appears that weighting the bipartite graphs with the hub scores of the annotators provides the best results. However, even in the case that the reliability metric of the crowdsourcing platform itself (the *_trust* variable of *Figure-eight* in our case) is used to weight the bipartite graphs, the results are not significantly worse. We are a little bit reluctant to generalize this conclusion because, in this paper, we have used too many annotations (499) per image. Thus, one of our future tests will involve a more typical image crowdtagging scenario in which much more images will be used and much fewer (typically less than five) annotations per image will be considered. In that case, only partial coannotation of the same images by the same annotators will take place in contrast to this paper in which all annotators annotated all images.

We are currently working to check, in practice, that the image-hashtags pairs mined from the Instagram through the approach described in this paper can be used, indeed, for a large-scale AIA in a content-based image retrieval scenario as proposed by Theodosiou and Tsapatsoulis [37].

APPENDIX PYTHON CODE

Here, we provide the full Python code that allows anyone who wishes to rerun the experiments and test their validity. The graphs as Pajek⁹ files are also publicly available at <https://irci.eu/insta-hashtags/>.

- 1) *Step 1:* Read the datafile produced through crowdsourcing (already converted to *json*¹⁰ format)

```
>>> import json
>>> with open('../data/F8_data.json', 'r') as fp:
...     data = json.load(fp)
>>> users = list(data.keys())
>>> data[users[0]].keys()
```

- 2) *Step 2:* Create a full bipartite graph composed by annotators and all available tags in order to rank the annotators.

```
>>> import networkx as nx
>>> import numpy as np
>>> exec(open('csv2imageGraphs.py').read())
>>> G = FullGraph(data,50,no_split,
...               '../data/full499.net')
```

- 3) *Step 3:* Apply the HITS algorithm and get the hub values (*h*).

```
>>> [h,a] = nx.hits(G)
```

- 4) *Step 4:* Use the hub values (*h*) computed in the previous step to initialize the bipartite graphs for each one of the images.

```
>>> ImageGraphs(data,50,h,no_split)
>>> G7 = nx.read_pajek('../data/img7.net')
>>> [annotators,tags] = nx.bipartite.sets(G7)
>>> list(sorted(tags))[:9]
['acosta', 'amigo', 'amores', 'and', 'animal',
 'animales', 'baby', 'bau', 'beautiful']
>>> list(sorted(annotators))[:5]
['3374092858', '3374094788', '3374097114', '3374098976',
 '3374107231']
>>> G7['3374092858']
{'cat': {'weight': 0.1629}, 'doll': {'weight': 0.1629},
 'white': {'weight': 0.1629}}
>>> G7['3374098976']
{'cat': {'weight': 0.1248}}
```

- 5) *Step 5:* For each image graph apply the HITS algorithm to rank the tags according to the computed authority value (*a*).

```
>>> import operator
>>> G7 = nx.DiGraph(G7)
>>> [h7, a7] = nx.hits(G7)
>>> sorted_a7 = sorted(a7.items(),
...                     key=operator.itemgetter(1), reverse=True)
>>> sorted_a7[:4]
[('cat', 0.2030), ('doll', 0.1318), ('white', 0.1268),
 ('cute', 0.1171)]
```

- 6) *Step 6:* Compute various recall and precision values for different authority score thresholds θ and plot the result.

```
>>> Thresholds = [0.25, 0.21, 0.17, 0.15, 0.13, 0.11,
...              0.09, 0.07, 0.05, 0.03, 0.01]
>>> p = []; r = []
>>> for t in Thresholds:
...     [R, P] = computeROC('img', 'data/gold.json', 50, t)
...     p += [P]; r += [R]
...
>>> from sklearn import metrics
>>> metrics.auc(r,p)
>>> import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
>>> plt.plot(p,r)
>>> plt.axis([0.2, 0.95, 0.2, 0.95])
>>> plt.title('ROC curve (Recall vs Precision) with
...          AUC = 0.692')
>>> plt.xlabel('Precision'); plt.ylabel('Recall')
>>> plt.grid(True); plt.show()
```

The proprietary Python functions that were developed and used in the experimentation (file *csv2imageGraphs.py*) are listed below:

```
import networkx as nx
import numpy as np
from wordsegment import load, segment
from nltk.stem import WordNetLemmatizer
from nltk.tokenize import TweetTokenizer
load()

def FullGraph(data,M,no_split, file_out):
    G = nx.DiGraph()
    for j in np.arange(M):
        img = str(j+1)+'_choose'
        img1= str(j+1)+'_own'
        users = data.keys()
        for u in users:
            key_list = list(set((tknznr.tokenize(data[u][img])+
                tknznr.tokenize(data[u][img1]))))
            keys = []
            for key in key_list:
                if key in no_split:
                    keys +=[key]
                else:
                    keyX = segment(key)
                    keyX = [lemmatizer.lemmatize(w) for w in keyX if
                        len(w)>2]
                    keys +=keyX
            keys = sorted(list(set(keys)))
            for key in keys:
                G.add_edge(u, key)
    nx.write_pajek(G, file_out, encoding='UTF-8')
    return G

def ImageGraphs(data,M,h,no_split):
    for j in np.arange(M):
        G1 = nx.DiGraph()
        img = str(j+1)+'_choose'
        img1= str(j+1)+'_own'
        users = data.keys()
        for u in users:
            key_list = list(set((tknznr.tokenize(data[u][img])+
                tknznr.tokenize(data[u][img1]))))
            key_list = [w.lower() for w in key_list]
            keys = []
            for key in key_list:
                if key in no_split:
                    keys +=[key]
                else:
                    keyX = segment(key)
                    keyX = [lemmatizer.lemmatize(w) for w in keyX if
                        len(w)>2]
                    keys +=keyX
            keys = sorted(list(set(keys)))
            for key in keys:
                G1.add_edge(u, key, weight=h[u]*100)
        filename = 'img'+str(j+1)+'_net'
        nx.write_pajek(G1,filename, encoding='UTF-8')
```

⁹<http://vlado.fmf.uni-lj.si/pub/networks/pajek/>

¹⁰<https://www.json.org/>

```

def computeROC(filestart , goldfile , N, thresh_level ):
    with open( goldfile , 'r') as fp:
        Gold = json.load(fp)
        retrieved = []; matched = []; gold = []
        tp = []; fp = []; fn = []
        for i in np.arange(N):
            filename = filestart +str(i+1)+'+'.net'
            gold_current = Gold[ filestart +str(i+1)]
            G1 = nx.read_pajek(filename, encoding='UTF-8')
            G1 = nx.DiGraph(G1)
            [h, a] = nx.hits(G1)
            keys = [key for key in a.keys() if a[key]>thresh_level]
            tp +=[key for key in keys if key in gold_current]
            fp +=[key for key in keys if key not in gold_current]
            fn +=[key for key in gold_current if key not in keys]
            gold += gold_current
            retrieved += keys
        R = len(tp)/len(gold)
        P = len(tp)/len( retrieved )
        return R, P

```

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