

What do Twitter users tweet about?

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Motivation

The purpose of this project is to analyse the “interest” that Twitter users show towards events happening around the globe. With the general belief being that the social network world focuses more on less significant events than more significant ones, as well as on events concerning the so called “Western world” in contrast to those concerning the Middle East or Africa, we would like to compare and contrast Twitter users’ reactions in various categories and types of events and draw conclusions about their tendencies.

The datasets

- Tweets from Switzerland, from Jan 2016 to Oct 2016.
- Tweets from around the globe, from 2011 to 2016.

The metrics

- Cumulative number of tweets and retweets per event.
- Distribution of tweets over months/years.
- For Swiss tweets, users’ feelings expressed per event.

Event categories & indicative events

- **Political events:**
 - Coup attempt in Turkey.
 - UK Referendum to leave the EU (#brexit).
- **Attacks & natural disasters:**
 - Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011.
 - Charlie Hebdo & Bataclan attacks in Paris.
- **Sports & cultural events:**
 - Summer Olympic Games 2012 in Rio, Brazil.
 - 2014 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.
- **Scientific and technological events:**
 - Discovery of Higgs Boson at CERN.
 - Rosetta spacecraft’s landing on comet.
- **Viral trends & showbiz events:**
 - Kate Middleton and Prince William’s wedding.
 - Actor Paul Walker’s death.

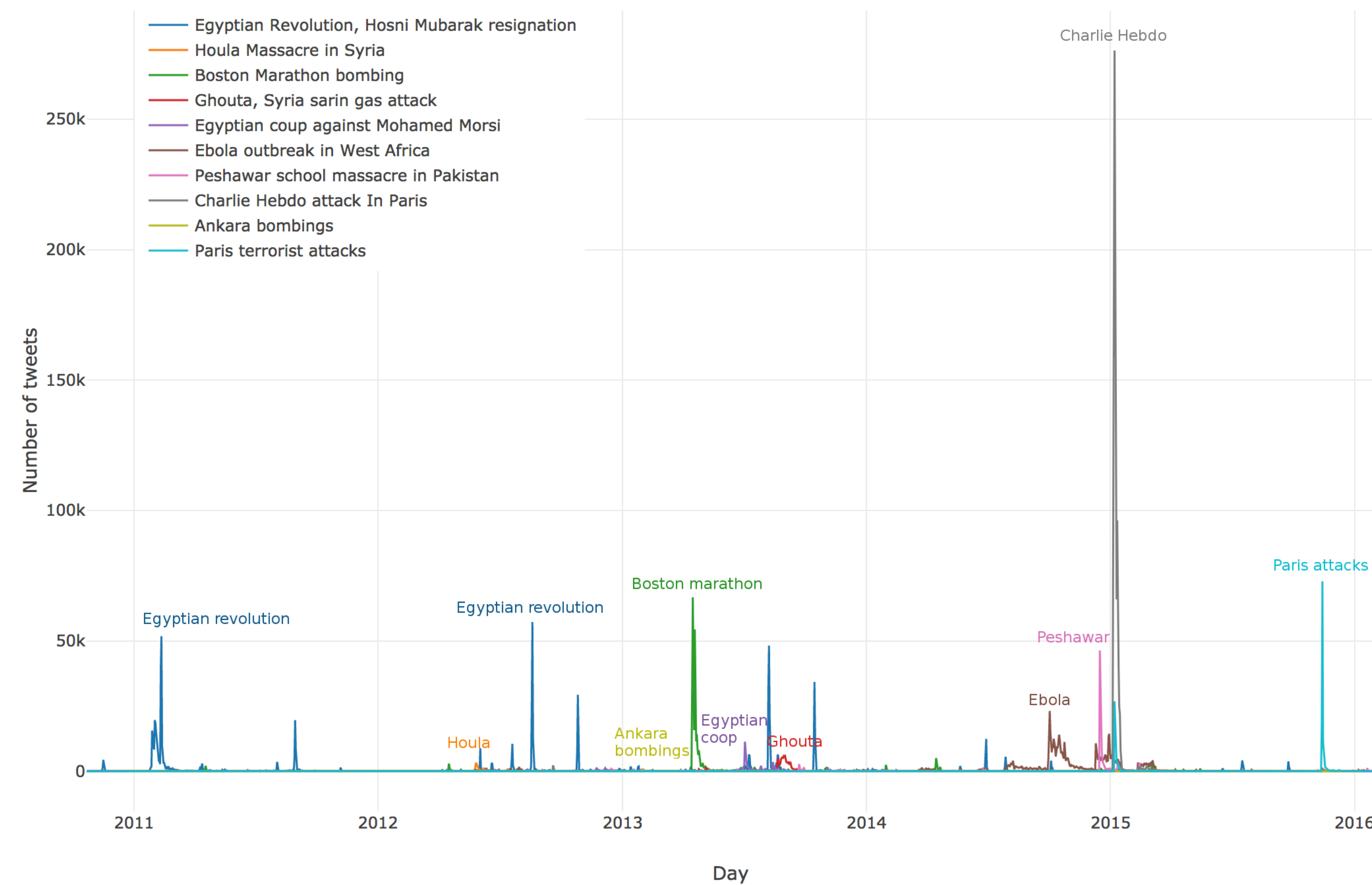
The tools

- Programming language: Python.
- For data analysis: Spark, Pandas, Jupyter notebook.
- For data visualisation: plot.ly, Jekyll.

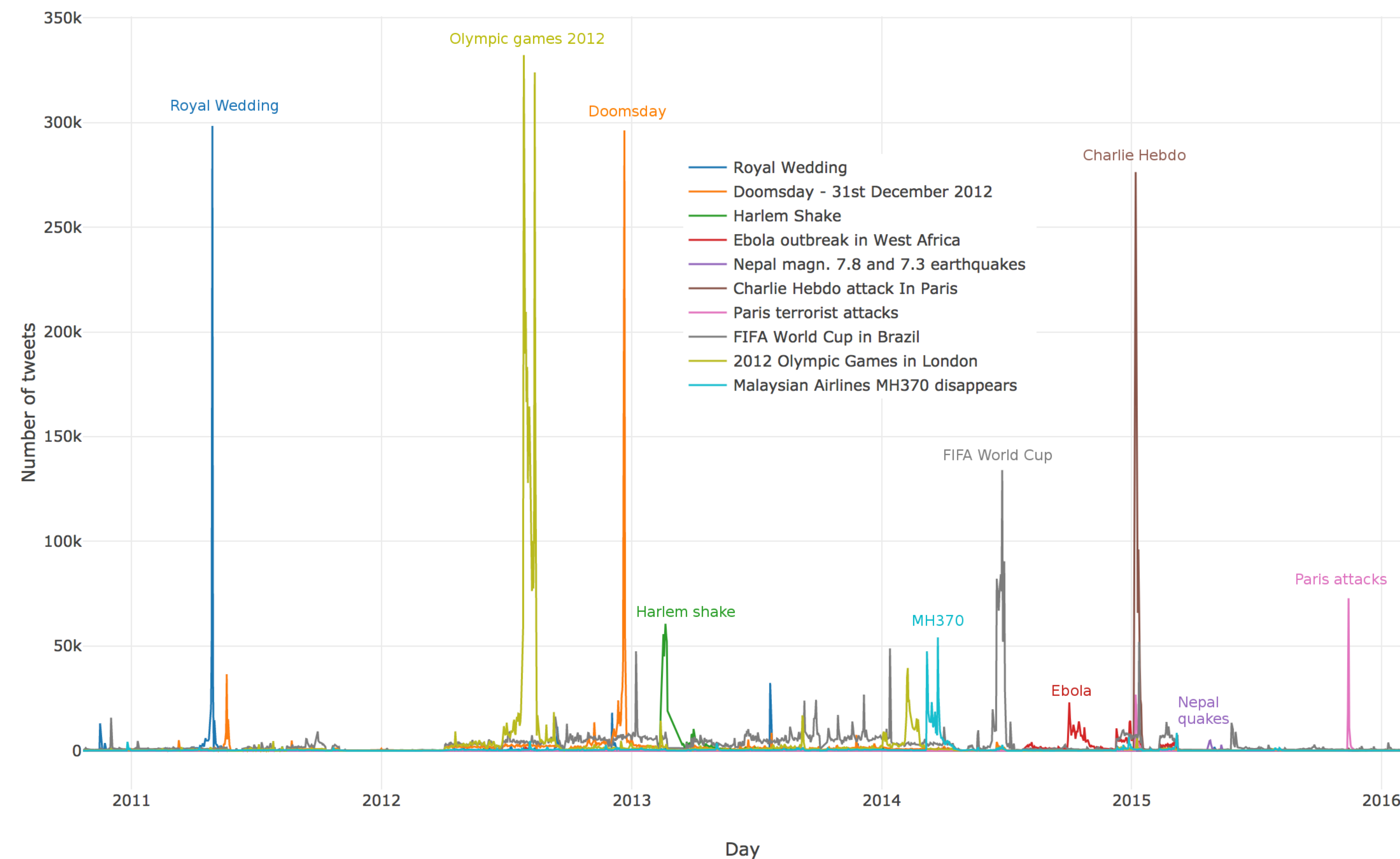
Data Story

To consult the full data story, please visit our website:
errikos.github.io/ada-showoff

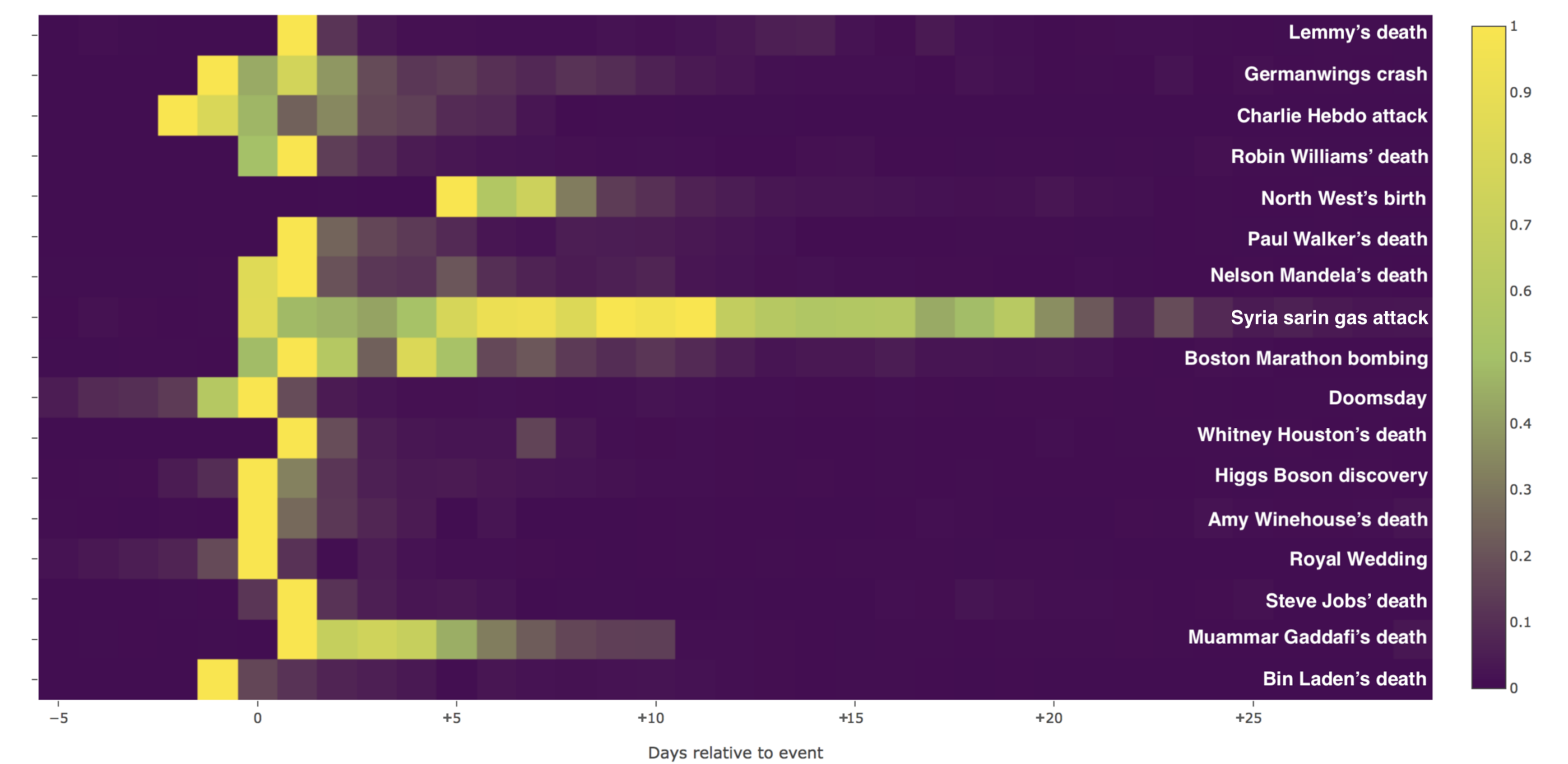
West vs. Rest of World impact



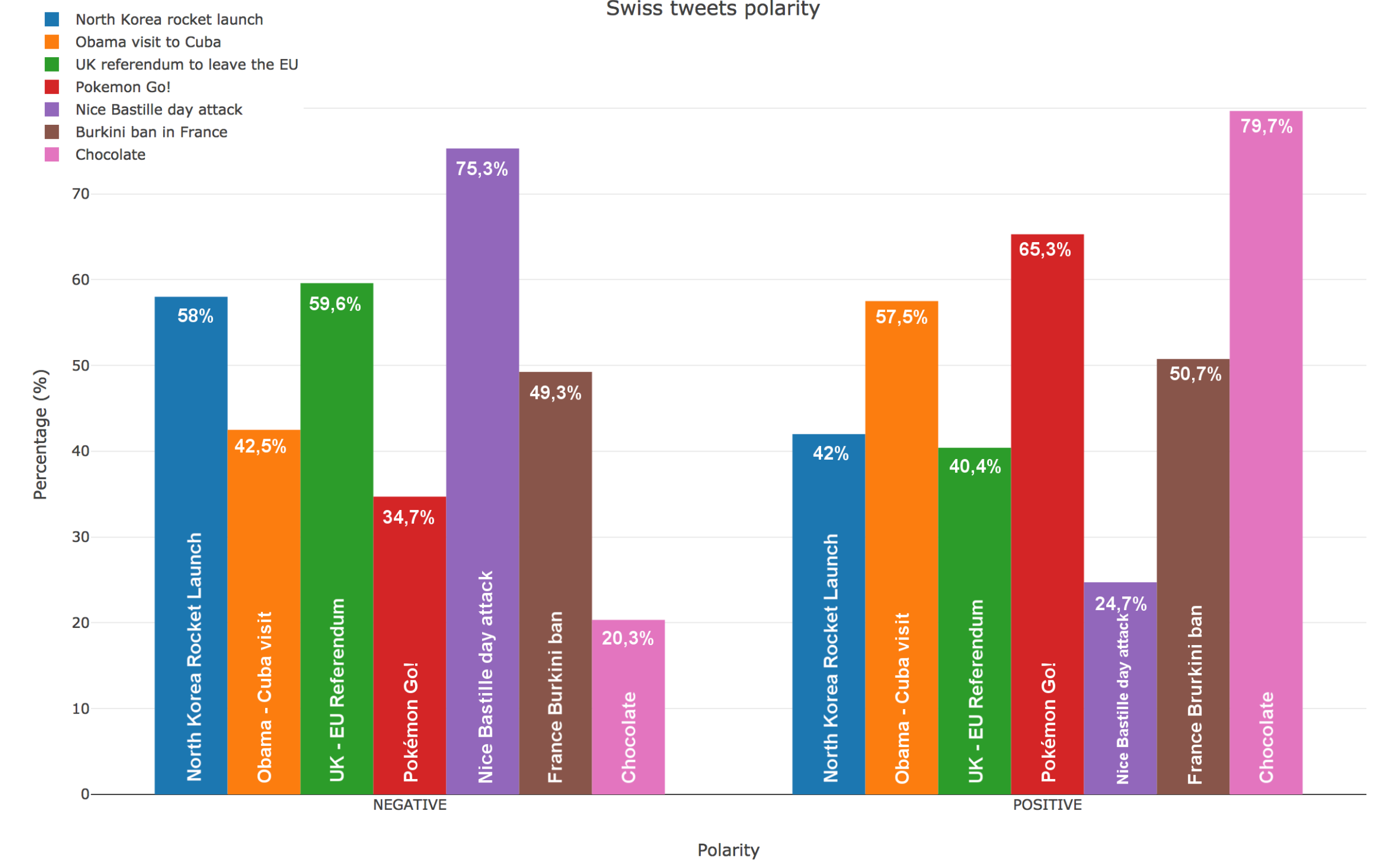
Entertaining vs. Disastrous events



Tweet distribution over 35 days



Swiss tweets polarity



Conclusions

- People seem to tweet a lot about the deaths of famous people, e.g. tweets about Paul Walker’s death are 2x more than tweets regarding any other subject. Steve Jobs’ and Amy Winehouse’s deaths also triggered a lot of reactions.
- International sports events capture Twitter users’ attention very much, as expected.
- Generally, people seem to tweet a lot more about events occurring in Europe or the US, than in the Middle East or Africa.
- Twitter users’ attention span seems to be rather small (users stop tweeting about a certain event, at most after a month). In addition, they tend to tweet for a slightly longer period of time about more serious events (political events, disasters, etc.), than about more “gossipy” events which tend to be forgotten pretty quickly.
- Political events seem to have caused a lot of polarity amongst Swiss Twitter users, e.g.: Obama’s visit to Cuba in 2016, the referendum about the UK’s exit from the E.U. and the Burkini ban in France.
- Nevertheless, we cannot really draw reliable conclusions about what people care about. We can only draw conclusions about what people tweet about, which might ultimately not be the same thing.