

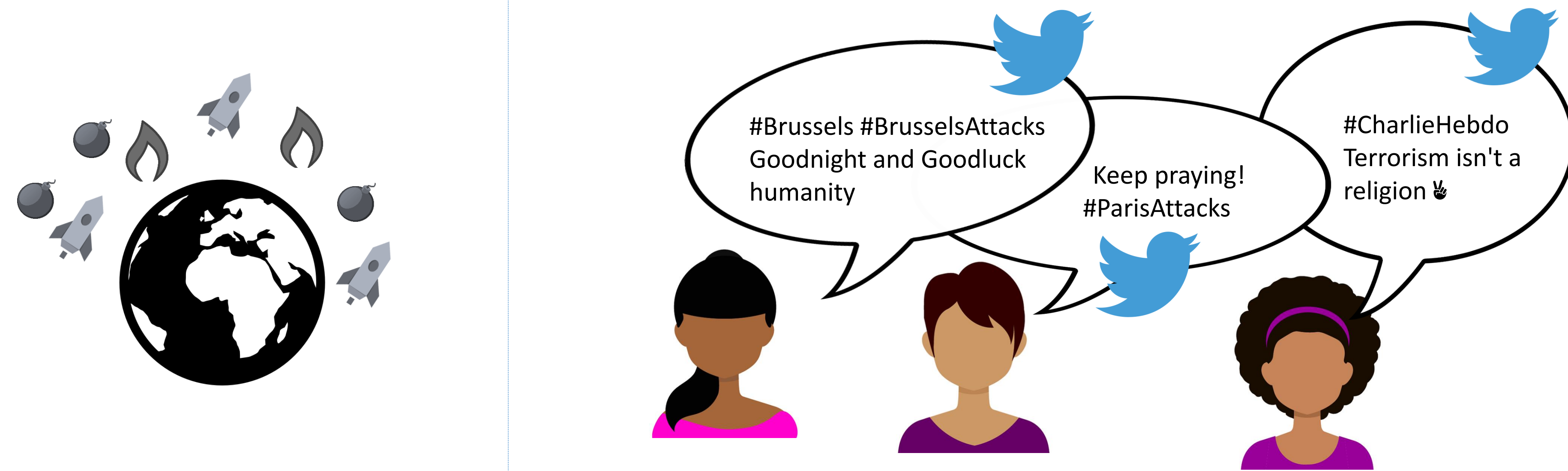
Breaking News Commentary

Users' Reactions to Terrorist Attacks in English-Speaking Twittersphere

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Background



User-generated content on breaking news/events is a key factor of citizen journalism (non-journalists gather, write and disseminate information).

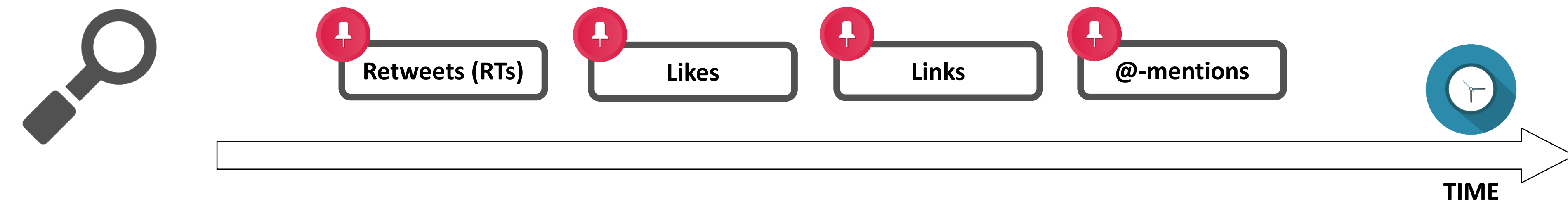
Hashtags like #JeSuisCharlie are becoming a symbol for solidarity and power against terror.

Methods

Attacks on Charlie Hebdo in Paris (Jan. 2015); #JeSuisCharlie or #CharlieHebdo

Attacks in Paris (Nov. 2015); #PrayforParis, #PeaceforParis or #NousSommesParis

Attacks in Brussels (Mar. 2016); #PrayForBelgium, #JeSuisBruxelles or #BrusselAttacks



Results

RQ1:
What is the dissemination and impact level (number of RTs and likes) of the tweets on the three triggering events and how does it change over the period of one week?

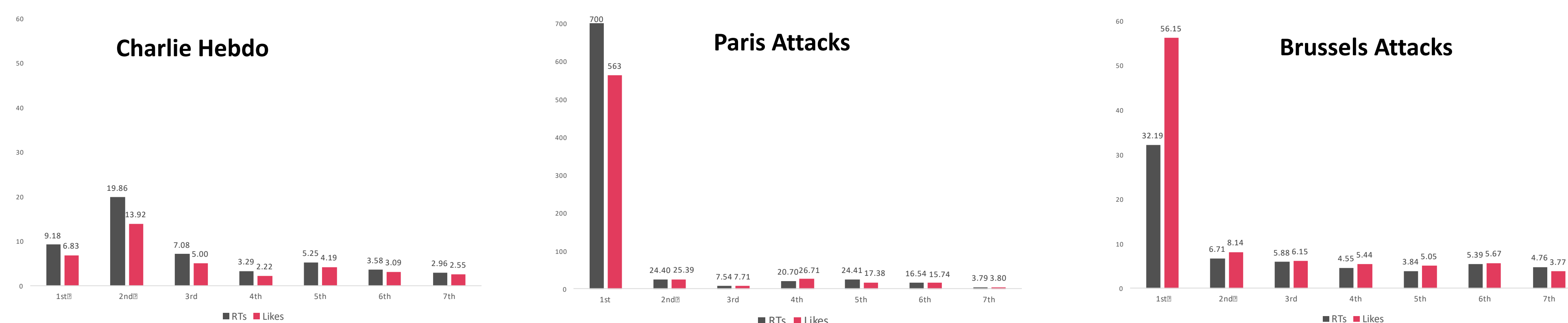


Fig. 1: Frequency (average) of RTs and likes of the tweets on the three triggering events; N = 1,000 tweets per day.

Results

RQ2:

How often do the users include external links and links within the Twittersphere (@) in the tweets on the three triggering events?

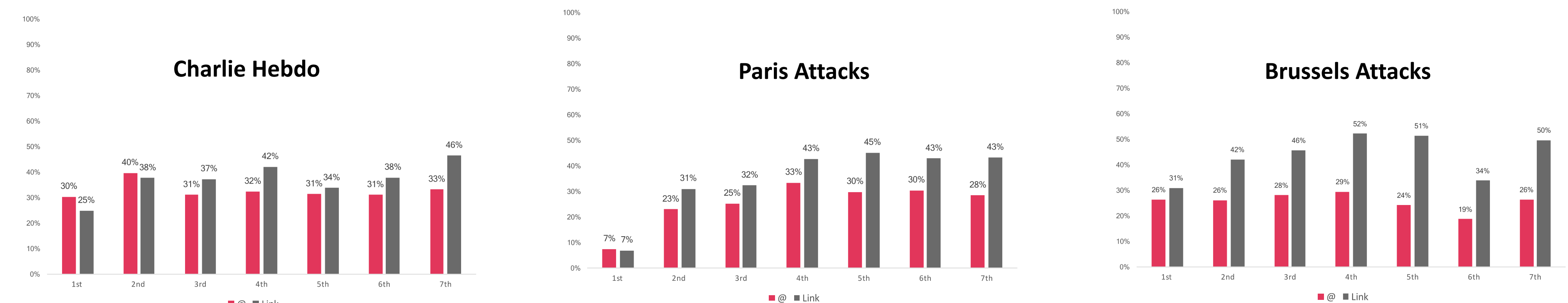


Fig. 2: Frequency of external links and @'s in the tweets on the three triggering events; N = 1,000 tweets per day.

RQ3:

Is there an association between embedding links (external and internal) and the dissemination and impact level (number of RTs and likes) of the tweets on the three triggering events?

Charlie Hebdo		Paris Attacks		Brussels Attacks	
♥ × @	-0.011	♥ × @	-0.03*	♥ × @	-0.005
↻ × @	-0.011	↻ × @	-0.031**	↻ × @	-0.008
♥ × 🔗	+0.005	♥ × 🔗	-0.032**	♥ × 🔗	-0.015
↻ × 🔗	+0.008	↻ × 🔗	-0.035**	↻ × 🔗	-0.014

Tab. 1: Pearson correlation between embedding links and number of RTs and likes on the three triggering events.

♥ = Likes; ↻ = RTs; @ = @-mentions (internal links); 🔗 = Links

RQ4:

Is there an association between embedding external and internal links in the tweets on the three triggering events?

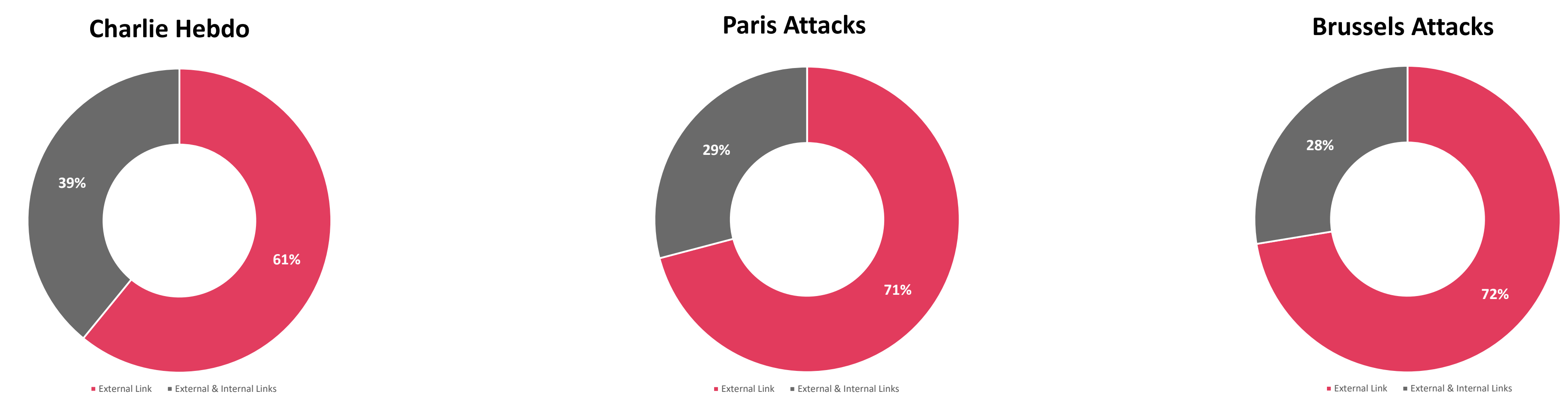


Fig. 3 : Association between external and internal links.

Conclusion

Average number of RTs and likes showed a tendency of higher impact and dissemination on the day of the triggering events, followed by an abrupt drop on the following six days.

Regarding the embedding of links, the users include more external links than internal ones (links to other Twitter accounts). There are more users who only include one type of link in the tweet.

There were only few weak correlations between embedding links (either internal or external) and the number of received likes or RTs.

➤ This confirms our previous findings that including links in tweets in the context of such triggering events does not necessarily affect the number of received RTs or likes.