

Research pair finds color a big factor in how much an image is shared on Pinterest

February 26 2015, by Bob Yirka



A woman looks at the internet site Pinterest.com on March 13, 2012

A pair of researchers, one with Yahoo Labs, the other Georgian Tech University, has found via analysis of data on the photo sharing site Pinterest, that the colors that dominate in an image can have an impact on how much an image is shared. In their paper published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, Saeideh Bakhshi and Eric Gilbert describe how they obtained sharing information on over a million images on the site, and what trends they found by doing so.

People have a natural inclination to share, whether food, objects, or photographs. The modern age is rife with web sites that allow people to do the latter, which has added an extra element to the process—popularity. Many people who post pictures to sharing sites hope their [images](#) reach the largest number of other people possible, which can only happen if those that first see it share it with others, and then those others share and so on. At times, such images go viral, though no one can really explain why some do so, while others do not. In this new effort, the researchers looked to see if there might be a measurable characteristic involved, namely the colors that dominate in an image.

To find out, they asked the folks at Pinterest if they could use the site as a study platform and were granted permission. They then used software to crawl publicly available images on the Pinterest web site. They acknowledge that there is no way to guarantee randomness on the site, but their software allowed them a way to approximate it. Their search results allowed them to analyze sharing data (which included 989,355 pinners) and color information for one million pictures that were posted over the span of an entire year (to prevent seasonal bias).

In analyzing their data, the researchers found a clear connection between color and numbers of shares—they report that images heavy with reds, purples and pinks tended to garner a lot of shares (repins), whereas those saturated with black, yellow or blue, were less likely to see a lot of sharing.

In discussing their findings, the researchers suggest that color may have an impact on sharing because of the impact it has on people—red, for example is seen as dynamic or dominant, while purple is often associated with children and white of course tends to calm people. In retrospect, they note, their findings should not be surprising since the site is dominated by female users. They suggest the same types of studies be done on other similar sites to spot larger trends.

More information: *PLOS ONE* [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0117148](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0117148)

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