

# SSV: An Interactive Visualization Approach for Social Media Stock-related Content Analysis

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**Keywords:** Data Visualization, Social Media, Content Analysis, Stock.

**Abstract:** Users interactions in social media have proven to be highly correlated with changes in the Stock Market, and the large volume of data generated every day in this market makes the manual analytical processing impractical. Data visualization tools are powerful to enable this analysis, generating insights to support decisions. In this article we present SSV, our data visualization approach to analyze social media stock-related content. In particular, we present the SSV architecture, as well as the techniques used by it to provide data visualization. Additionally, we show that the visualizations displayed by SSV are not disposed arbitrarily, by contrary, it uses a ranking system based on visualization entropy. Moreover, we perform experiments to evaluate the ranking system and the results show that SSV is effective to rank data visualizations. We also conducted a case study with finance specialists to capture the usefulness of our proposed approach, which points out room for improvements.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a valuable platform for communication, and users interactions sentiment on social media are highly correlated with stock market activities (Bollen et al., 2011). Due to high volume of content shared every day, it is impractical to manually analyze the data. To address this problem, data visualization frameworks can be used as an assisting tool to analyze and understand social media content aggregations. Visualizations manipulate data to enable findings that support decision making. This procedure was formalized as *Exploratory Data Analysis*, this concept emphasizes the statistical insights analysis on data variance using graphics (Tukey, 1977).

In this article we present our interactive social media visualization approach to analyze stock-related interactions, including the sentiment of these interactions. We also describe the architecture and visualizations techniques used by our approach. Particularly, the evaluation of our proposed visualization techniques is based on usefulness and effectiveness, that is, if the visualization helps translating data into a more structured and functional model, such as information or knowledge (Chen et al., 2009). The main contributions of this article are: i) We propose a visualization ranking technique based on entropy; ii) We evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of our pro-

posed approach.

We organized this article as follows: In Section 2 we present the concepts used in this work. In Section 3 we present the related work. In Section 4 we describe the SSV architecture. In Section 5 we report the evaluation results. Finally, in Section 6 we present the outlines conclusions and future work.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The core concepts used in the SSV approach and in its evaluation are presented in this section.

### 2.1 Interactive Visualization

*Data visualization* is the communication of data through visual techniques. In more general terms, a visualization is the transformation of a symbol into geometry (McCormick, 1988). Moreover, in the computational space, information visualizations can be described as computer-generated interactive visual representations of data to enhance perception (Card et al., 1999). Visualizations support data-driven decision making and include, performing graphical calculations, answering and creating questions about data, enabling insights otherwise hard to achieve, identifying patterns, allowing further research, observing data

in context, to enable better understanding. The history of visualizations is summarized by Figure 1, which highlights the milestones events in data visualization.

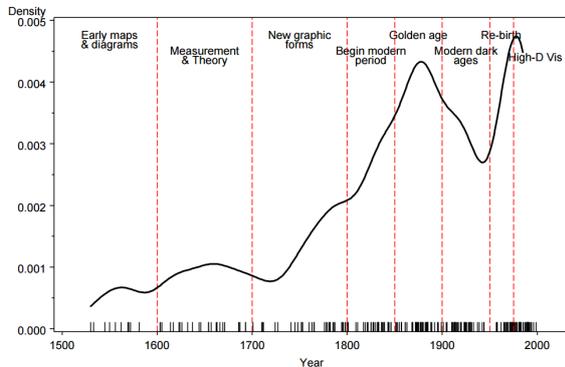


Figure 1: Time distributions of milestones events in the history of data visualization. Source: (Friendly, 2006).

Due to high volumes of information being produced in the Digital Era, the need of better visualizations tools to synthesize information was increased. The demands of users for interactive and responsive interfaces demanded even more attention for improvements in usability. To address this problem in the data visualization area, interactivity is a key component, as it facilitates data exploration.

*Interactive visualizations* changes based on user interaction to enhance its *usability* and enable more powerful insights. Interactive visualizations are used across many fields (Ward et al., 2010). A visualization information survey (Liu et al., 2014) indicates the rise of interactive visualization works and presents *usability* as one of the challenges for the information visualization area, which is directly associated with *interactivity*.

## 2.2 Information Entropy

In information theory, an *alphabet* is described as a set  $\mathbb{Z} = \{z_1, z_2, z_3, \dots, z_n\}$ , of all possible values a variable  $Z$  can assume. The components of the set are also referred as *letters*. In this article, we refer to the process of transforming a information set into a new one as *alphabet transformation*. This process happens when translating raw data to visualizations. In this translation, the information is processed to be used by each visualization technique and, therefore, the alphabet entropy before and after the alphabet transformation may differ.

*Information entropy* is a metric for information disorder (Shannon, 2001). Given an *alphabet*  $\mathbb{Z} = \{z_1, z_2, z_3, \dots, z_n\}$ , and  $\mathbf{p}(z_i)$  as the probability function for a *letter*, the information entropy is calculated by:

$$S(\mathbb{Z}) = -\sum_{i=1}^n \mathbf{p}(z_i) \log_2 \mathbf{p}(z_i) \quad (1)$$

Chen and Golan (2016) describes an abstract model for visualization and inference processes (Chen and Golan, 2016), which indicates that the transformation of data spaces when producing visualizations regularly corresponds to the reduction of the information set entropy in the *alphabet transformation* process and therefore, the higher the reduction is, the better the visualization is.

## 2.3 Ranking Evaluation

There are many ways of evaluating ranking systems. The Discounted Cumulative Gain (DCG) metric is used to consider results with varying relevance levels (Järvelin and Kekäläinen, 2000). To do so, the nDCG takes in consideration two factors that other metrics in the literature do not:

- Marginally relevant results are penalized in contrast to highly relevant ones;
- Results in early positions are more important than later ones.

The process to calculate the nDCG is: For an ordered collection of results  $P = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$  and  $n$  associated relevances values for each result  $R = \{rel_1, rel_2, rel_3, \dots, rel_n\}$ , the DCG is given by:

$$DCG_P = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{rel_i}{\log_2(i+1)} \quad (2)$$

This equation retrieves the score for the given ranking. However, it does not demonstrate how close the ranking is to the best performance. To solve this problem a normalization process can be conducted and it requires the calculation of the Ideal Discounted Cumulative Gain (IDCG), which is given by the DCG of the collection of results  $I = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ , necessarily ordered, from the most relevant result to the least relevant one. Then, the normalized Discounted Cumulative Gain (nDCG) is obtained by the following equation:

$$nDCG_P = \frac{DCG_P}{IDCG_P} \quad (3)$$

The nDCG value ranges from 0 to 1 and indicates how close the system is to the best possible ranking.

To calculate the *average performance* of a ranking system, the nDCG metric have to be computed for different rankings, generated by different system entries and then, the system performance is given by the average of these values.

### 3 RELATED WORK

Previous research proposed frameworks to analyze social media content stream. In particular, a system retrieves data on popular events from Twitter in a dynamic, real-time scenario (Gaglio et al., 2016). The system was evaluated based on an experiment during the 2014 FIFA World Cup and presented great accuracy for topic detection. Our approach does not focus on providing analysis, it is a supporting tool for analyzing social media content aggregation.

Social media is largely used by researchers to analyze people behavior, for instance, a study explores the relation of twitter activity and their health profile (Paul and Dredze, 2011) and other approaches focused on the correlation of the shared content and the probability of the user profile to be suicidal (Colombo et al., 2016). Moreover, a research explored the correlation between sentiment and stock activities. In particular, an investigation of how current general opinions on stocks impacts stock activities have been conducted (Chen et al., 2014). Additionally, other studies explore clustering of opinions, dividing them by topics (Nguyen et al., 2015). These techniques have achieved better results than historical price methods. Our approach have explored visualizations of sentiment features on stock topics to enable similar insights from analyzers.

Due to the mentioned correlations between sentiment, users profile and changes in the financial market, there are visualizations systems to explore the social media and websites user sentiments. OpinionBlocks displays the most discussed topics in consumers product reviews and associate them with the respective sentiment polarity of the review (Alper et al., 2011). TexVis system analyzes people's reaction and feedback regarding an event or product based on a particular keywords (Humayoun et al., 2017).

Additionally, some visualization approaches have explored the stock market (Roberts, 2003), their work evaluates information designs for stock market ticks and is one of the first data visualization approaches to assess the finance area and demonstrates that information visualization improves human performance in trading. Other approach presents a visualization system for stock market charts to support analysis of financial time series data to enable general insights into

stock behavior (Ziegler et al., 2010). Our approach is complementary, their work focus on visualizations of stock behavior specifically whereas our approach explores social media stock-related content.

A business intelligence system explores the possibility of displaying sentiment of users on company products through a geographical map (Sijtsma et al., 2016). The referred approach allows location exploration and business branches filtering. In their approach, a case study was conducted to evaluate the system that identified the system as a great supporter for data exploration.

Our approach is mostly inspired by Vox Civitas, a visualization system for journalistic inquiry (Diakopoulos et al., 2010), which aggregates social media content to support journalists find events for further research. An exploratory study was conducted with specialists that indicated how the elements of the system were used as well as general strengths and weaknesses. Our system evaluation follows the methodology used in their work, applying it to our visualization approach.

Moreover, this kind of application has seen increased importance in industry as well through tools such as Tableau (Murray, 2013), which are software solutions for data visualization and analytics that displays adaptable visualizations according to the dataset that it is connected to.

In our work, by the contrary to all the other related approaches, focus on the stock context in social media and provides a ranking system to display the visualizations in order, instead of placing them in an arbitrarily chosen order.

## 4 SSV

SSV stands for Social Stock Visualization. Our approach aims at exploring data of social media stock-related content. Figure 2 presents the architecture, used by our approach. The architectural modules of our approach are further described in this section.

### 4.1 Fetcher

This component is responsible for acquiring stock-related social media content. A given content is considered stock-related if its text contains the stock symbol of any NASDAQ100 companies. This companies were chosen because they are of high interest of financial analysts and are popular stock acquisition possibilities. To avoid redundancies, identical posts by the same user are ignored. Our approach indicates whether a content is a shared content or not. Shared

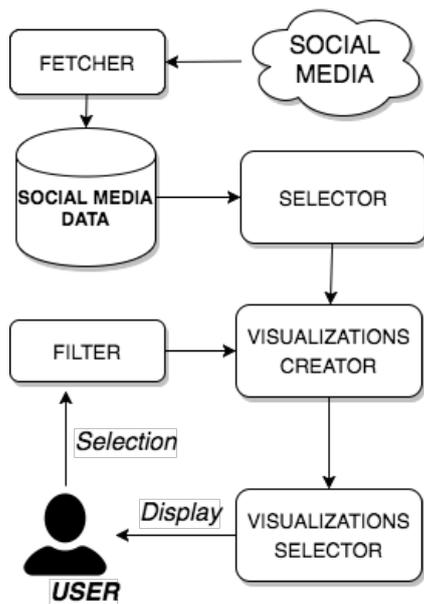


Figure 2: Proposed visualization architecture, used in our approach.

contents are texts refers to social media interactions originally produced by another person. Additionally, if a user has shared a content produced by himself, as this information is irrelevant, it is also excluded.

Afterwards, the retrieved content is stored in the social media data local corpus. Our approach separates the content by the stock mentioned in their text and increments it with the following meta-information: Country, latitude, longitude, day, time, text content, a list of stocks mentioned and the total numbers of users that have interacted with the referred content. Finally, the local corpus will be further processed by the selector component.

### 4.2 Selector

The selector component is responsible for processing the local corpus, which contains social media data collected by the fetcher component. As previously mentioned, sentiment of user shared content in social media is correlated to the stock activities (Bollen et al., 2011) and therefore, this component calculates sentiment *polarity* and *subjectivity*. To do so, we have used a rule based technique that is independent of the domain, this approach is furthered described by Khan (Khan et al., 2011) and uses WordNet database (Miller, 1995) to learn the patterns of content sentiment based on the contextual sentence structure.

Once the features are processed, this component proceeds every feature to the visualizations creator component along with the feature type. Our approach

has defined the following feature types: numerical, categorical, temporal and spatial. This information is further used to construct the visualizations and the process for doing so is described in the visualizations creator component section.

### 4.3 Filter

This component receives information about the selections made by the user through the interface presented in the Figure 3.

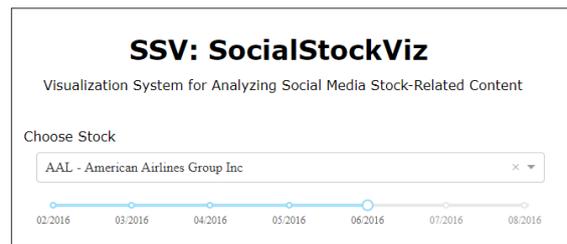


Figure 3: SSV interface for user entries.

The interface presented has the following elements: i) *drop-down menu*, which is used by the user to select which stock from *NASDAQ100* companies to display; ii) *slider component*, which is used to inform the time period to be included in the visualizations. The selected options are given to the visualizations creator component to limit the creation of the visualizations, that is, respecting the stock and time constraints defined by the user and this way, displaying only relevant results by taking into consideration the user preferences.

### 4.4 Visualizations Creator

This component is responsible for constructing the visualizations presented in our approach. It receives the features from the selector component and considers options defined by the filter component. Our approach separates the features types four groups: categorical, numerical, spatial and temporal. Our approach is able to create the following visualizations: bar graph, doubled bar graph, line plots, scatter plots, scatter map and choropleth maps. Table 1 presents the number of features required for each visualization type.

The dataset contains four different numerical features and two categorical features. The four numerical features are: number of positive interactions with the shared content, number of shares the content received, text subjectivity and text polarity. The two categorical features are: originality (which indicates whether a content is original or not) and the country

Table 1: Feature requirements for each visualization type. "Num" stands for Numerical.

Type	Num	Nominal	Spatial	Time
Bar graph	1	1	0	0
Double bar	2	1	0	0
Line	1	0	0	1
MultiLine	1	1	0	1
ScatterPlot	2	1	0	0
ScatterMap	1	0	1	0
Choropleth	1	0	1	0

of the shared content. For displaying the geographical visualizations, the latitude and longitude features are used. To present the line plots visualizations, a temporal feature is used.

Our approach automatically produces the visualizations based on the possible feature combinations, while respecting the constraints displayed on Table 1. This process generates a total of eighty unique and interactive visualizations, that is, the user can manipulate the visualization by zooming in or out and by filtering some categories to be displayed.

Figure 4 presents a simple bar graph visualization. This type of visualization is used to display how numerical data behave in different groups defined by a categorical feature. Hovering over a bar displays the exact numerical value associated with that category, that corresponds to the sum of the numerical feature for every instance in the category. To visualize multiple features at a time, a variant visualization is used. Figure 5 presents a variant of the bar graph, named doubled bar graph, that enables the comparison of two numerical features instead of only one. Hovering over the visualization will display the exact value of the numerical feature. Moreover, in this visualization the user can filter the categories to be displayed, enabling the separate analysis of numerical features.

Figure 6 presents the line plot visualization. This type of visualization demonstrates how a numerical feature changes over time. The variant displayed on Figure 7 presents the numerical feature in different groups, defined by categorical features, changing over time. In the later one, it is possible to filter the groups from the categorical feature to be displayed, enabling a more precise analysis of groups that interests more the user. In both visualizations it is possible to change the time period to either a shorter or longer one.

Figure 8 presents an example of the scatter plot visualization, used to observe the correlation between two numerical features. One categorical feature is used to determine the color of each data point and, therefore, enabling more insights. Hovering over data points displays more information about the data en-

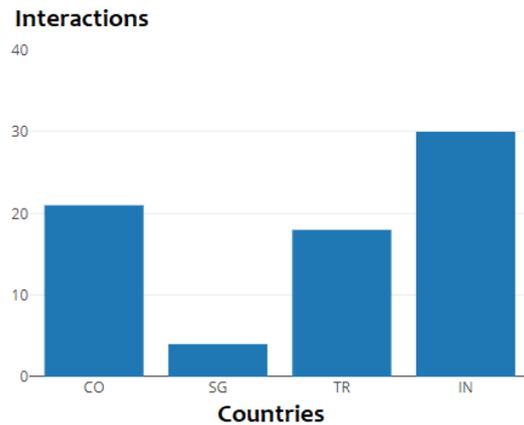


Figure 4: Interactive bar graph generated by SSV.

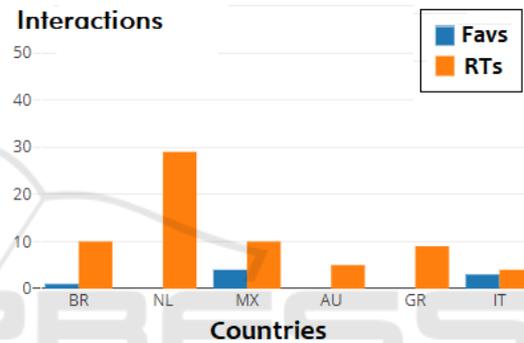


Figure 5: Interactive double bar graph generated by SSV.

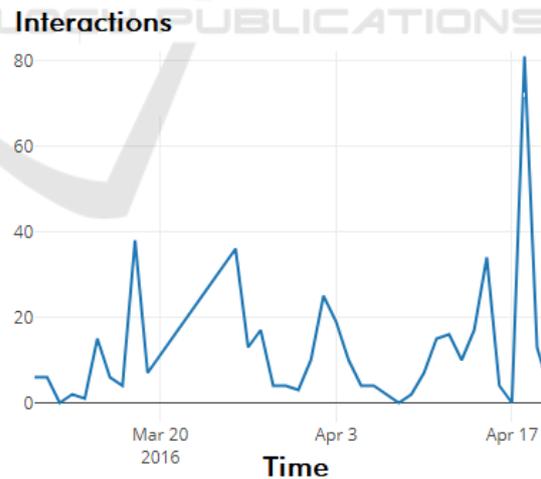


Figure 6: Interactive line plot graph generated by SSV.

try, such as the text of a social media content and the exact values for the numerical features used in the visualization.

Figure 9 presents the geographical scatter visualization. It requires latitude and longitude along with a numerical feature to display each data point. Hover-

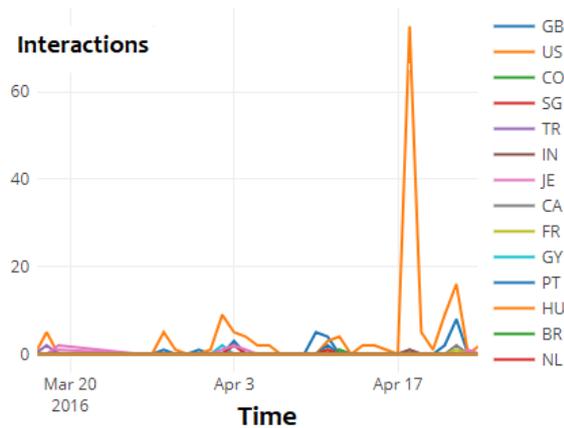


Figure 7: Interactive multiple line plot graph generated by SSV.

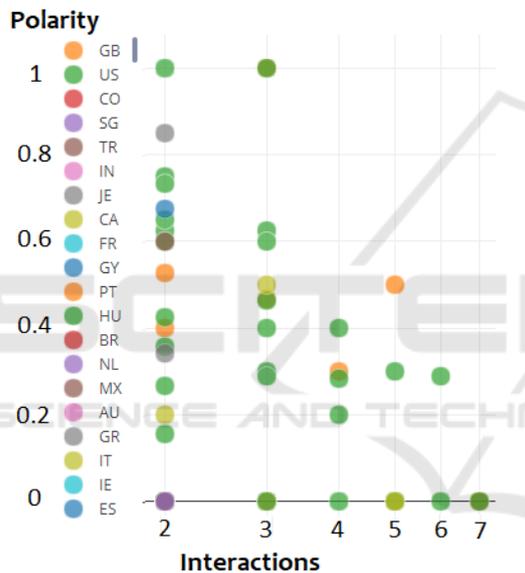


Figure 8: Interactive scatter plot graph generated by SSV.

ing over the data points display the text content and the exact value of the numerical feature associated with that entry. Another type of geographical visualization is presented in Figure 10, which is used to visualize the distribution of a numerical feature in different countries, the absence shared content mentioning a specific stock in a country leads to not displaying it in the map. In both geographical plots, social media contents without location information are not considered.

#### 4.5 Visualizations Selector

This component is responsible for analyzing all visualizations generated by the visualizations creator component in order to build the ranking of visualiza-

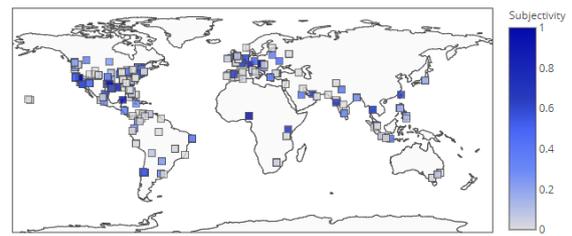


Figure 9: Interactive geographical scatter plot graph generated by SSV.

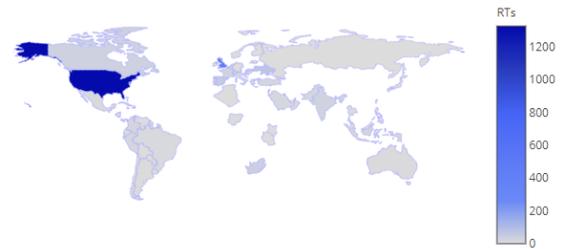


Figure 10: Interactive choropleth graph generated by our approach.

tions and then display them ordered by their respective score. Our approach uses the *entropy reduction* of the *alphabet transformation* process that occur when creating a visualization as the score, this is obtained by:

$$\text{Score}(V) = \frac{S(\mathbb{Z}_v)}{S(\mathbb{Z}_r)} \quad (4)$$

Where  $V$  is the given visualization,  $S(x)$  is the entropy calculation for the set  $x$ , as described in the section  $\mathbb{Z}_v$  is the *alphabet* for the given visualization and  $\mathbb{Z}_r$  is the original alphabet, that is, the alphabet for the data before the *alphabet transformation* process.

This metric to rank the visualization was inspired by the work of (Chen and Golan, 2016) as it indicates that a bigger entropy reduction after the alphabet transformation is correlated with a more optimized visualization process. To calculate this metric we analyze the information at two different moments: *i*) the raw information and *ii*) the information displayed in the visualization. Between moment *i* and *ii* the data is transformed through preprocessing, some informations will be discarded or clustered to fit the corresponding visualizations style. Then, the entropy of the alphabet in both moments is calculated and the alphabet compression from moment *i* to *ii* is the metric used to rank the visualizations.

## 5 EVALUATION

This section presents the methods used for evaluating our approach. Seven finance market specialists supported this evaluation process to explore the effectiveness and usefulness of the rankings generated and our overall approach.

The seven specialists were chosen to improve diversity. Five had formal training in finance and two only job training. The specialists were from four different countries. Four male and three female, with ages ranging from 24 to 57. All of them are familiar with social media and stock visualization tools.

### 5.1 Ranking

To calculate the *average performance* of the system ranking, it is necessary to determine the relevance level of each result (visualization). To do so, seven finance market specialists that are familiar with stock visualization systems have assigned a grade from zero to five, to each visualization they were exposed to. The relevance of each system result was calculated by the average of the grades assigned by the financial specialists.

To minimize the amount of work while still enabling a good evaluation of the system, this process was made for three different stocks entries, that were chosen by the researchers. The three results of the nDCG using the calculated relevance levels is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: nDCG values for different rankings produced with different stock entries.

Stock	nDCG
Alphabet Inc Class C	0.9693945858
American Airlines Group Inc.	0.9814165825
Facebook Inc.	0.9675392669

Therefore, the *average performance* of the our ranking is approximately 0.972, which is nearly 2.8 percent away from the best ranking possible and, therefore, indicates a great overall performance.

### 5.2 Case Study

The study focused on assessing the following questions: i) Is SSV useful and effective to enable insights? ii) How do users interact with the visualizations? iii) What are the shortcomings of our approach in this process? This evaluation was conducted online to enhance the external validity of the study and to include specialists from different countries. The participants were asked to explore the data of the

three stocks previously decided by them (Alphabet Inc Class C, American Airlines Group Inc. and Facebook Inc.) and report their actions and opinions.

During the exploration, users have spent more time in the first visualizations and then skimmed through the other ones. They reported that the early visualizations were able to retrieve much more relevant insights than the later ones and that the interactivity of the approach was useful for further exploration. The zoom-in interactive feature have been used to explore more cluttered visualizations. The mouse hovering was frequently used to obtain more informations about the data points in each visualization and thus, it was useful supporting the analytical process.

The financial specialists suggested that SSV approach is useful for retrieving insights on users opinion about different stocks and that the order of the visualizations assisted in the knowledge discovery process. They also indicated that the visualizations were very responsive and that they did not had any performance issues while analyzing them. In the other hand, even though the best visualizations are ranked, there was some redundancy on the information being visualized and there was no technique to compare different stocks or to relate the visualizations to the real stock value changes. Two specialists suggested that when clicking on visualizations more informations could be provided.

## 6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ranking system proved to be very efficient to display the most relevant visualizations first. However, as stated by the users, the ranking often presents visualizations about similar informations and therefore, future work should consider the diminished value when disposing sequential visualizations about similar informations to enable more insights about the data aggregation.

Moreover, future versions of SSV should consider the possibility of crossing the social media data with other data sources, such as the real stock changes, so users can analyze correlations between them. We intend to increment our approach by adding more visualizations techniques and improving the existing ones. The interactivity of the visualizations should be enhanced to enable users to explore the data with more freedom and potentially generating more insights.

Furthermore, the usage of dimensionality reduction techniques may be considered to expand the visualizations possibilities. The presented ranking technique, as well as the system architecture, can be applied to different visualization systems and the results

it produces in different contexts should be further analyzed. Lastly, we believe many improvements can be made to the system and that there is space for innovation in data visualization area for systems to assist financial analysts in their stock acquisition decisions.

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