

Saudi Stock Market Sentiment Analysis using Twitter Data

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Abstract: Sentiment analysis in the finance domain is widely applied by investors and researchers, but most of the work is conducted for English text. In this work, we present a framework to analyze and visualize the sentiments of Arabic tweets related to the Saudi stock market using machine learning methods. For the purpose of training and prediction, Twitter API was used for collecting off-line data, and Apache Kafka was used for real-time streaming tweets. Experiments were conducted using five machine learning classifiers with different feature extraction methods, including word embedding (word2vec) and the traditional BoW methods. The highest accuracy for the sentiment classification of Arabic tweets was 79.08%. This result was achieved with the SVM classifier combined with the TF-IDF feature extraction method. At the end, the predicted sentiments of the tweets using the outperforming classifier were visualized by several techniques. We developed a website to visualize the off-line and streaming tweets in various ways: by sentiments, by stock sectors, and by frequent terms.

1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, stock market behavior has a random pattern that cannot be predicted very accurately. However, with the advent of machine learning, the user-generated content can be analyzed and used to predict stock returns (Ranco et al., 2015; Karabulut, 2013). Recent research has shown a significant relationship between the stock returns and the user-generated content (Ranco et al., 2015; Pagolu et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017). Different data sources were used to collect the users' content, such as Twitter (Ranco et al., 2015), Facebook (Karabulut, 2013) and LiveJournal (Gilbert and Karahalios, 2010). Also, different analysis techniques have been applied on users' data, such as mood analysis (Nofer and Hinz, 2015) and sentiment analysis (Ranco et al., 2015; Pagolu et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017). However, a significant correlation between the stock returns and user-generated content were mostly found in twitter data by utilizing sentiment analysis (Ranco et al., 2015).

Although there are many studies that have investigated the use of Twitter as a major source for public-opinion analysis, none of them analyzed the sentiment of Arabic stock market tweets. In this work, we contribute to the field of sentiment analysis of Twitter Arabic data. Sentiment analysis is concerned with classifying an opinion of text into positive, negative or neutral. We used the sentiment analysis to classify

tweets about Saudi stock market into positive or negative. The stock market is changing frequently, therefore, it is very important to analyze real-time tweets. We used Apache Kafka for real-time sentiment analysis of Saudi stock market tweets. Then, the predicted sentiment of the collected and the real-time tweets were visualized into a website.

The proposed work can be used by individuals who are interested to invest in the Saudi stock market. The website provides insights about to what extent people are satisfied with the Saudi stock market in different sectors. To reproduce our results and for future work, the code and data used in the experiments can be accessed through GitHub¹.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we briefly review the related research about user-generated content and the stock market. The methodology is discussed in details in section 3, starting by the data collection, followed by the data analysis, data streaming and data visualization. In section 4, we show the evaluation results of the sentiment analysis. Section 5 presents the website that was developed to visualize the results of this work. Finally, in section 6 we will wrap up with a conclusion and a discussion on future work that can be extended from this paper.

¹<https://github.com/Noufst/Saudi-Stock-Market-Sentiment-Analysis>

2 RELATED WORK

In this section, we briefly review the research which investigates the correlation between the Twitter data and financial markets. Most of the research used sentiment analysis (Ranco et al., 2015; Pagolu et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017), whereas analyzing the user's mood has not been largely explored (Nofer and Hinz, 2015). This might be because sentiment analysis has shown to be significantly affecting the stock market while the users' mood has shown no significant correlation with the stock market. Also, the majority of the research was conducted on English tweets (Ranco et al., 2015; Pagolu et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017). One study has used Germany tweets (Nofer and Hinz, 2015); however, the tweets were translated into English before the analysis.

Ranco et al. investigated the relations between 30 stocks of the DJIA index and Twitter data (Ranco et al., 2015). They collected over 1.5 million English tweets using the Twitter Streaming API. Three financial experts have labelled 100,000 tweets using three sentiment labels: negative, neutral or positive. They used SVM model to classify 1.5 million tweets to compare the data of the stock price returns with tweets polarity. The results have shown a significant relationship between the abnormal stock returns with sentiments of tweets.

A more focused analysis of one company was explored by Pagolu et al. (Pagolu et al., 2016). The aim of this study was to find if there is a correlation between the public opinions of the company with stock prices of that company. 2.5 million tweets about Microsoft were collected using Twitter API, however, only 3,216 tweets were annotated by a human. A machine learning model was built using the Random Forest algorithm with an accuracy of 70.2%. They compared the sentiments of the tweets with stock price data of Microsoft, and a strong correlation between them were found.

Oliveira et al. have analyzed the tweets to forecast the stock market behavior (Oliveira et al., 2017). They collected roughly 31 million tweets using Twitter REST API. The collected tweets contain hashtags of all stocks traded in US markets. A lexicon-based model was used to extract the sentiment of the tweets. Many machine learning algorithms such as Neural Network, SVM and Random Forest were used to predict the stock market. The results have shown that the stock market behavior can be predicted using sentiment analysis of twitter data.

Some studies have investigated the effect of users' mood in the stock market. Nofer and Hinz conducted an empirical study to explore the correlation between

the people's mood and the stock market (Nofer and Hinz, 2015). They collected around 100 million German tweets using Twitter API and included only positive and negative tweets using a dictionary of keywords. They translated German tweets into English in order to use the ASTS tool. The DAX intraday returns of 30 major German companies were used in the analysis. The result has shown no significant relationship between the stock market and Twitter users' mood.

In this study, we aim to analyze Arabic tweets related to the Saudi stock market. The sentiments can be further analysed to examine the correlation between tweets and the Saudi stock index.

3 METHODOLOGY

This section describes the framework that we present to analyze the sentiment of Arabic tweets for the Saudi Stock market. In general, there are three approaches that one can handle this problem: supervised learning, lexicons or using a hybrid of both. In the current work, we adopt supervised learning to extract the sentiment of tweets. Figure 1 illustrates the framework of the sentiment analysis process, starting from collecting the data until the visualisation of the results.

3.1 Data Collection

As one of the most popular social media platforms in Saudi Arabia, Twitter has been selected for this study as the data source for the sentiment analysis. In order to collect the tweets related to the Saudi stock market, the Twitter search API² was queried with a specific keywords such as "المؤشر العام", "تداول", "ناسي", etc. However, Twitter's standard search API only searches against a sampling of recent tweets published in the past 7 days. Thus, to collect tweets in one year period, the IDs of users who publish tweets related to Saudi stock market were extracted. Then, we extracted the timelines of these users and filter them based on the keywords and date. The irrelevant tweets (e.g. advertisement tweets) were eliminated.

A total of **5209** Arabic language tweets over the period of January 1st, 2019 to December 13th, 2019 related to the Saudi stock market were extracted from twitter API (after excluding redundant and irrelevant tweets, e.g. advertisement tweets). Each tweet record contains: (1) tweet identifier, (2) date/time of creation, and (3) text. The tweets used in this study are based on data obtained from public timelines.

²<https://dev.twitter.com/>

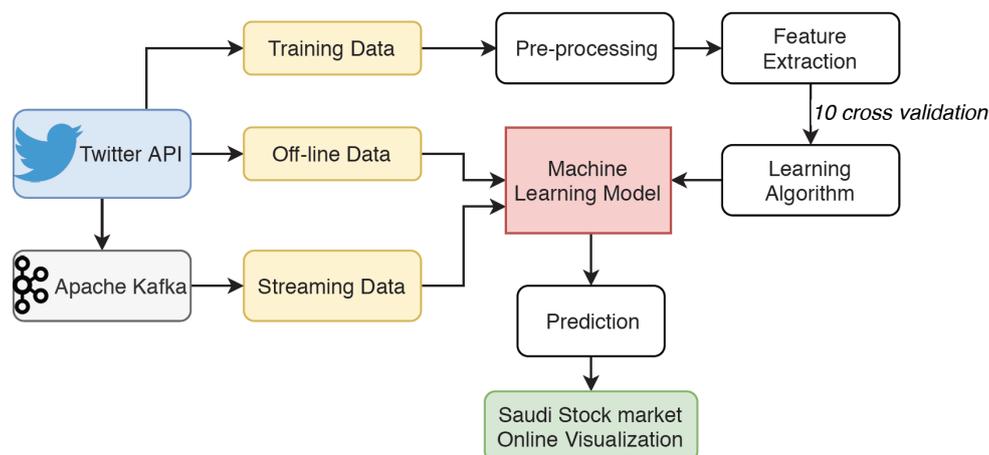


Figure 1: Framework of the proposed twitter sentiment analysis system.

3.2 Data Pre-processing

The pre-processing of the tweets' text involves a set of operations that are already shown to be efficient with a high accuracy result (Duwairi and El-Orfali, 2014). Four stages were employed:

1. **Cleaning:** Tweets contain many emoticons and unnecessary data, thus, cleaning step is applied to better define the feature space. RegEx matching and preprocessor³ packages in Python were utilized to remove URLs, hashtags, emoticons, user mentions and extra whitespace.
2. **Normalization:** In order to transform the tweets to a more unified sequence, the following steps were applied:
 - Prolonged word showing intense emotions like "ممتااa" is replaced with "ممتاز".
 - Punctuation and diacritics (short vowels) such as "ة" are removed.
 - Tatweel "ـ" is removed. For example, using Tatweel in the word "السوق" may look like "السوق".
 - The letters that appear in different forms are Unified. For example, unify "أ, إ, ا, آ" to be "ا".
3. **Stop Words Removal:** *Stop Words* are a group of words that do not express any emotion, such as preposition. Thus, stop words are removed, for the model to focus on the expressive words, and to enhance the quality of the classifier.
4. **Tokenization:** The process of tokenization splits sentences (tweets) into words, which makes the

³<https://pypi.org/project/tweet-preprocessor/>

texts easier for additional processing; e.g. producing the "words vectors".

3.3 Sentiment Analysis Model

The design of the sentiment analysis model involves two sub-tasks: feature extraction and model training. For this study, three types of word representation techniques were used for the learning features, and five different machine learning classifiers were selected as the prediction model.

3.3.1 Feature Representation

Machine learning methods require lots of feature engineering work for proper textual representations. Most Arabic sentiment analysis applications still rely on costly hand-crafted features and lexicon-based features to achieve the preferred accuracy (Abu Farha and Magdy, 2019). Many of the state-of-art NLP architectures adopted word embedding techniques, which have many advantages compared to Bag-of-Words (BoW) representation. For example, words that share similar contexts in the text are placed within close proximity to one another in the vector space. In addition, word embeddings have lower dimensions than the BoW (Mikolov et al., 2013a).

In this work, we utilized neural word embeddings created by Altowayan and Tao (Altowayan and Tao, 2016) as an alternative for such hand-engineered features. They utilized the well-known and widely used *word2vec* model (Mikolov et al., 2013b) with *Continuous Bag of Words (CBOW)* model architecture to embed Arabic words in a continuous vector space. Their embeddings were built using a corpus contains around 190 million words from 3 sources: Quran, Arabic

news, and consumer reviews to enrich the corpus with different dialectal vocabulary.

Despite that BoW introduced limitations such as sparse representation and large feature dimension (Mikolov et al., 2013a), we used BoW for building a baseline model. Two approaches of BoW were implemented: counting word occurrence and Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF). Both methods were applied using the *feature_extraction.text* module available in the open source Python library: scikit-learn.

3.3.2 Models Training

In this work, we used a supervised machine learning approach to train a sentiment classifier. For the purpose of training, 427 tweets were labeled manually by two experts in Tadawul All Share Index (TASI). The tweets were labeled with two sentiments: positive (211 tweets) and negative (216 tweets). Positive tweets were given the label "1", and negative tweets were given the label "0". The meaning and examples of each label are illustrated in Table 1. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the ground-truth data labels should be considered informed but not 100% accurate, as human decisions can involve errors.

Five different learning algorithms were employed for the development of the tweets sentiment classifier: (1) Random Forest, (2) Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD), (3) Linear SVM, (4) Logistic Regression and (5) Decision Tree. All learning algorithms were implemented using *scikit-learn* libraries. The algorithms were trained to classify new observations based on the set of labeled data (tweets), each described by 3 different feature representations (word2vec, count occurrence and TF-IDF), which are demonstrated in Section 3.3.1. Lastly, in order to evaluate the classifiers' performance in more general cases, 10-fold cross validation was used from scikit-learn's *model_selection* module.

3.4 Data Streaming

In the stock market, it is crucial to have a real-time sentiment analysis of users' opinion. Therefore, Apache Kafka⁴ was utilized to predict the sentiment of the tweets in real-time. Apache Kafka is a distributed service that uses topic-subscribe messaging which can be used as a real-time streaming platform. In this paper, we created a topic named *stock_market* to collect streaming tweets on Saudi stock market. The architecture of Kafka that is integrated with the

trained model is presented in Figure 2. The architecture consists of six components:

- **Kafka Producer:** This component is one of the main modules in Kafka. It publishes the streaming tweets to the *stock_market* topic that was created previously.
- **Kafka Broker:** Kafka consists of a cluster of servers; each server is called a broker. The server stores a key, value (the tweet text and time created), and a timestamp of each tweet and saves the tweets in the *stock_market* topic in the server. The data that is stored in the broker are immutable, any new tweet will be appended to the log.
- **Kafka Consumer:** The consumer can subscribe to one or more topics. In this research, the consumer subscribes to the *stock_market* topic. Now, the consumer can consume the data in the server to be analyzed and visualized in the next two steps.
- **Machine learning model:** The previously trained model described in Section 3.3, will be loaded in order to be used to classify real-time streaming tweets.
- **Sentiment analysis/prediction:** Each tweet stored in the *stock_market* topic and consumed by the consumer will be fed to the classifier. The classifier will return the sentiment of a tweet; whether it is a positive or a negative tweet.
- **Visualization:** Finally, the results will be visualized by a website. The visualization outcome is described in Section 3.5.

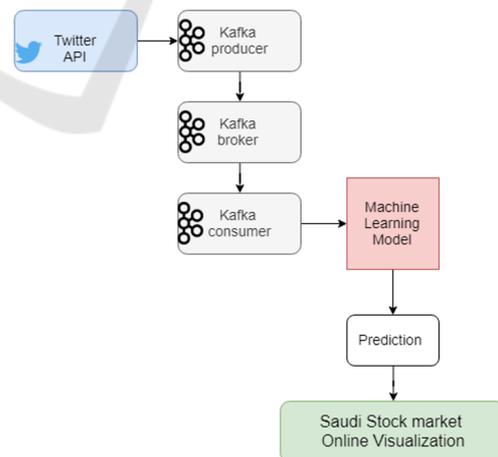


Figure 2: Kafka architecture.

⁴<https://kafka.apache.org>

Table 1: Labels of tweets used in annotation and an example of each label.

Label	Example Tweet	English Translation
Positive: if there is a clear indicator of bull market even if it is not strong	رأيي في السوق الأسبوع القادم بأنه أخضر وحافل بالعطاء.. بداية يوم الأحد قد يهبط قليلاً للتخويف فقط ثم نرى تحرك للشركات القيادية والله أعلم.	My opinion of the market next week is that it's green and full of tender.. By the start of Sunday, it may go down a little, for intimidation only. Then, we will notice a move for the leading companies, and God knows best.
Negative: if there is a clear indicator of bear market even if it is not strong	التحليل الفني والمالي خارج السيطرة، سوق الأسهم لا تتوقع فيه خبر محفز نهائياً، السوق تشبع بالنزول	Technical and financial analysis are out of control. Do not expect a motivational news for the stock market, it's oversold.

3.5 Data Visualization

For the data to be meaningful and useful for public users, a website is developed to visualize the sentiments of Saudi stock market data. In the website, the sentiment of the previously collected tweets, as well as the real-time tweets, are visualized. The tools that have been used in both the server and client sides are described next.

- Server-Side Tools:
 - Flask: Flask⁵ is a framework written in python that facilitates the design and development of web applications. The main advantage of using this framework is its extensibility.
 - Python: in particular, python is used in the server side for real-time twitter data streaming. It runs the Kafka consumer that is written in python. It sends the results in a JSON format to the client to be read using JavaScript.
- Client-Side Tools:
 - Interfaces: HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) are used to build the website. HTML and CSS are the base of web scripting languages for developing web applications. HTML and CSS aren't the same; they are like the bones and skin for any website. HTML is responsible for constructing and structuring the actual content of the website, including the written text or figures, whereas, CSS is used to design or decorate the website, such as the colors, the layout and the visual effects.
 - Data Processing: JavaScript⁶ and jQuery⁷ are used to load, modify, transform, and control

the data. JavaScript is a dynamic scripting language that makes websites more interactive. It enables changing the content, layouts or position of the website dynamically. jQuery is an open-source library written in JavaScript. It contains a set of functions that facilitate the use of a JavaScript.

- Charts Visualization: to visualize the data in an attractive and readable way, two JavaScript libraries were used: Chart.js⁸ and D3.js⁹. Both a powerful data visualization using different types of charts such as (bar chart, pie chart, line chart, etc.). Chart.js provides simple graphs representation while D3.js can be used for complex data visualizations that need a high level of interactivity.

4 MODEL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

To examine the effectiveness of the proposed model and for the purpose of methods comparison, the performance is reported using F1-score and MAcc (mean accuracy of the 10-folds cross validation). The detailed performance of all the five classifiers on each of the three feature representations are reported in Table 2.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the results presented in Table 2. First, word embedding perform poorly on all classifiers comparing to the other two feature representations. This shows that traditional BoW approach may work better than Word Embedding in small datasets. In addition, since our context is very domain specific, we couldn't find some corresponding *vectors* from the pre-trained

⁵<https://palletsprojects.com/p/flask>

⁶<https://www.javascript.com>

⁷<https://jquery.com>

⁸<https://https://www.chartjs.org>

⁹<https://d3js.org>

Table 2: F1-score and accuracy percentage for each classifier and feature representation.

Classifier	Metric	Feature Representation		
		Count Occurance	TF-IDF	Word Embedding
Random Forest	Mean accuracy	75.38	77.06	62.06
	F1-score	75.75	74.63	62.00
SGD	Mean accuracy	72.36	75.42	65.29
	F1-score	72.32	74.44	63.88
Linear SVM	Mean accuracy	75.94	82.15	69.85
	F1-score	75.98	79.08	68.42
Logistic Regression	Mean accuracy	73.97	78.07	64.49
	F1-score	75.00	74.34	63.11
Decision Tree	Mean accuracy	71.83	75.23	54.48
	F1-score	74.07	71.92	53.29

word embedding model created by Altowayan and Tao (Altowayan and Tao, 2016). They have generated the embedding using a corpus from Quran, Arabic news and consumer reviews with different Arabic dialect vocabulary that does not include all Saudi dialect vocabulary. This suggests that such a simple use of the word embedding may not give us an advantage to Arabic sentiment analysis. This should encourage research in the application of word embedding for Arabic to adapt more future-promising techniques.

As can be seen from Table 2, TF-IDF representation performed best among the three different representations. Furthermore, SVM outperformed all other learning algorithms with each feature representation. SVM has F1-score of 79.08 and mean accuracy rate of 82.15 using the TF-IDF representation.

5 SAUDI STOCK MARKET ONLINE VISUALIZATION

The goal of this paper is a visualization that presents the sentiment of the Saudi stock market trends. Using the best classifier obtained with the process explained in Section 3, we classified the off-line tweets and the streaming tweets into one of two categories (positive or negative). The sentiment of the resulted tweets are visualized using several different visualization techniques. Each technique is designed to highlight different aspect.

Figure 3 shows the total number of positive and negative tweets about the Saudi stock market per day. The user can select a specific month and see the people opinion about the Saudi stock market or about Aramco shares specifically. Also, the user can select to view the total number of positive and negative tweets over the year by selecting "all" using the

slider. In Figure 3, the peak of the tweets was on 17 Nov 2019 (the day where Aramco opened the subscription of the shares). The graph shows that most of the tweets on 17 Nov are positive, which gives an indicator that people are optimistic and interested in trading in Aramco.

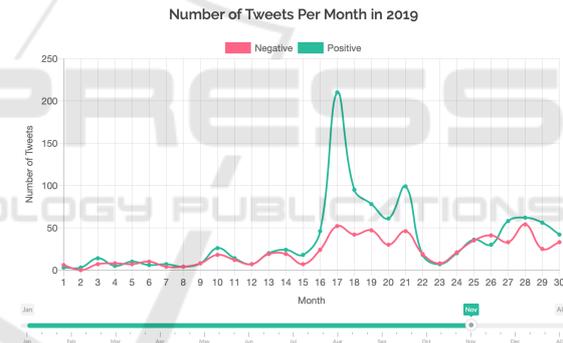


Figure 3: The total number of positive and negative tweets in November 2019.

In Figure 4, the total number of positive and negative tweets for each sector is shown. This graph can be very useful when an individual is interested in investing in one of the following sectors: (Cement, Banks, Real-Estate, Agriculture, Retail, Telecommunications, and Insurance). The results show that people in Saudi Arabia are mostly talking about Cement, Banks, Real-Estate and Telecommunications sectors. However, not all of the tweets are positively talking about these sectors. As we can see in Figure 4, most of the tweets are positive in Cement, Banks and Real-Estate sectors, while the number of positive and negative tweets about the Telecommunications sector is almost equal. The tweets about the insurance sector stocks are mostly negative.

Moreover, we noticed a lot of tweets about the

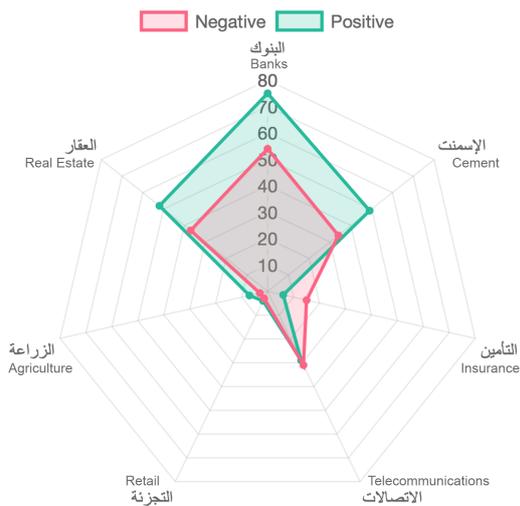


Figure 4: The total number of positive and negative tweets per sector.

Saudi stock market in general. Therefore, we visualized the data into another graphs that show the total number of positive and negative tweets about the Tadawul All Share Index (TASI), which is the major stock market index on the Saudi Stock Exchange. We compared the results of TASI with Aramco shares and all the other sectors. Figure 5 shows the number of positive (the green bars) and negative (the red bars) tweets for Aramco, TASI and other sectors. The figure revealed that about 64% and 62% of TASI and others sectors tweets are negative, respectively. However, about 88% of Aramco shares tweets are positive.

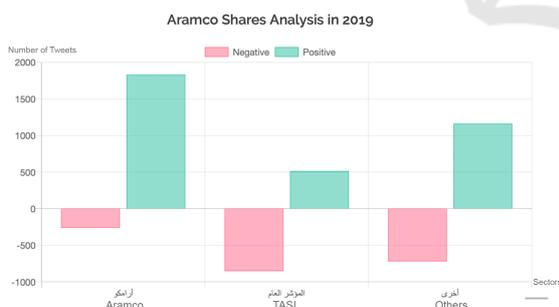


Figure 5: A comparison between Aramco, TASI and other sectors in term of total number of positive and negative tweets.

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the most frequently used terms in the positive and negative tweets, which were extracted using the text mining steps listed in Section 3.2 with the predictions from the proposed model. In order to show the Arabic terms in proper a form, the word cloud was generated by installing the following packages in Python:

arabic_reshaper, *bidi.algorithm* and *wordcloud*. The significance of a word (i.e. based on its frequency) is associated with the font size of the word.

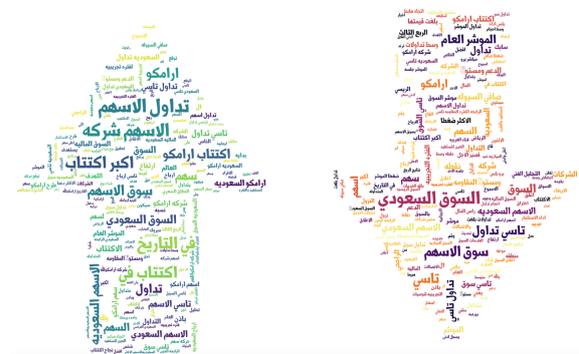


Figure 6: Word Cloud of the positive and negative tweets.

All the previous graphs show the result of analysing the off-line data. Nevertheless, the same graphs were implemented to visualize the streaming data in real-time. Complete screenshots of the website can be accessed in the Appendix.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This paper addressed a sentiment analysis for tweets expressed in Arabic language about the Saudi stock market. We have collected 5209 tweets about the Saudi stock market. We analyzed the sentiment of the tweets using 427 labeled tweets, five machine learning classifiers, and three different feature extraction methods. The SVM classifier with the TF-IDF training model achieved the highest accuracy (79.08%), therefore it was chosen to be loaded in the website to predict the sentiments of the off-line and real-time streaming tweets. We utilized Apache Kafka to stream real-time tweets. Then, we visualized the results using different types of charts in a website developed using Flask framework, Chart.js and D3 libraries. The preliminary evaluation results revealed that TF-IDF feature representations performed better than word embeddings and word occurrence. We believe that this work should encourage research in the application of word embedding for Arabic to adapt more future-promising techniques. Moreover, as exemplified in the previous work, sentiment analysis in Arabic language is a challenging task when compared to other languages.

In this paper, we have trained only 427 tweets for analyzing people’s sentiment about Saudi stock market. In future, we aim to target larger training

dataset, and to build a domain-specific lexicon with enough data to evaluate the best method that can be used to classify the tweets. In addition, another data sources can be used beside Twitter, such as Stocktwits¹⁰ which is a communication platform for people who are interested in trading and stock market. The results can be further analyzed with the Saudi stock market index to find if a significant correlation exists between them. Moreover, the proposed analysis can be utilized by companies who are interested in finding a relationship between their short-term market performance and people opinions. In addition, investors can utilize our website to support the decision of which sector to invest in.

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APPENDIX

Screenshots of the interfaces of the Saudi Stock Market Sentiment Analysis Website are presented next.

¹⁰<https://stocktwits.com>



Figure 7: The home page of the website.

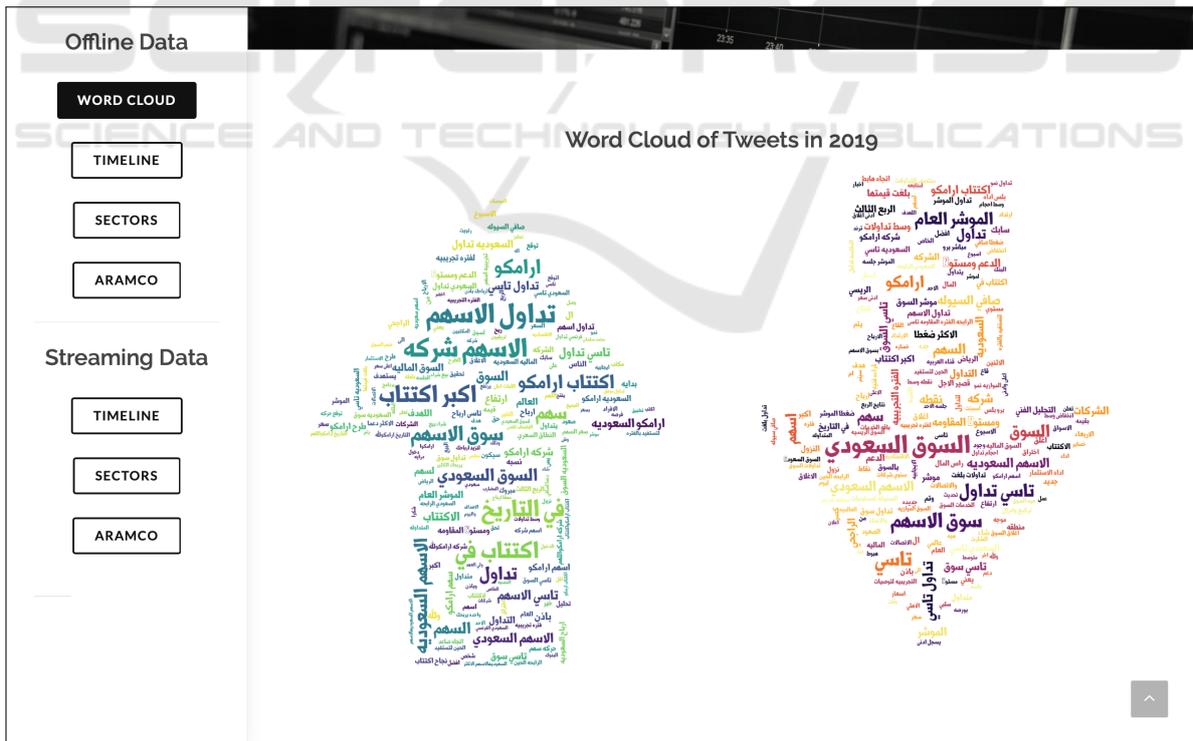


Figure 8: A webpage showing World Cloud of the off-line tweets.

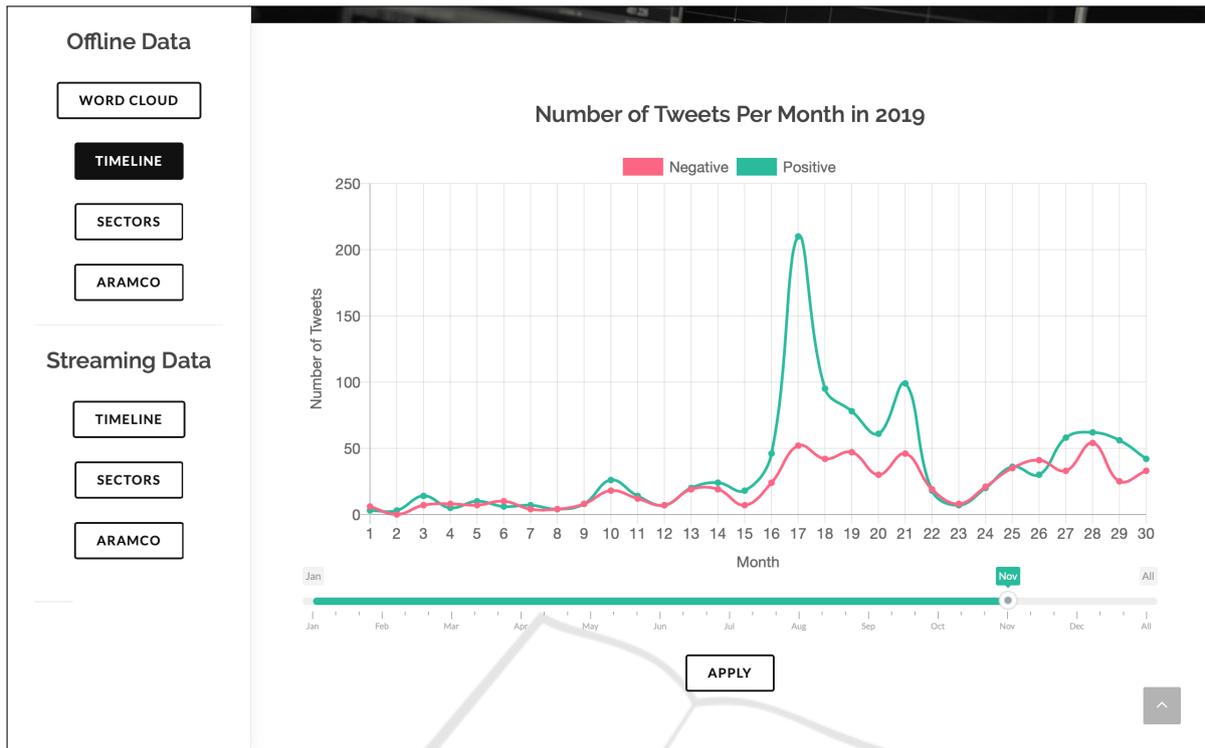


Figure 9: A webpage showing the number of tweets per day and their sentiments.

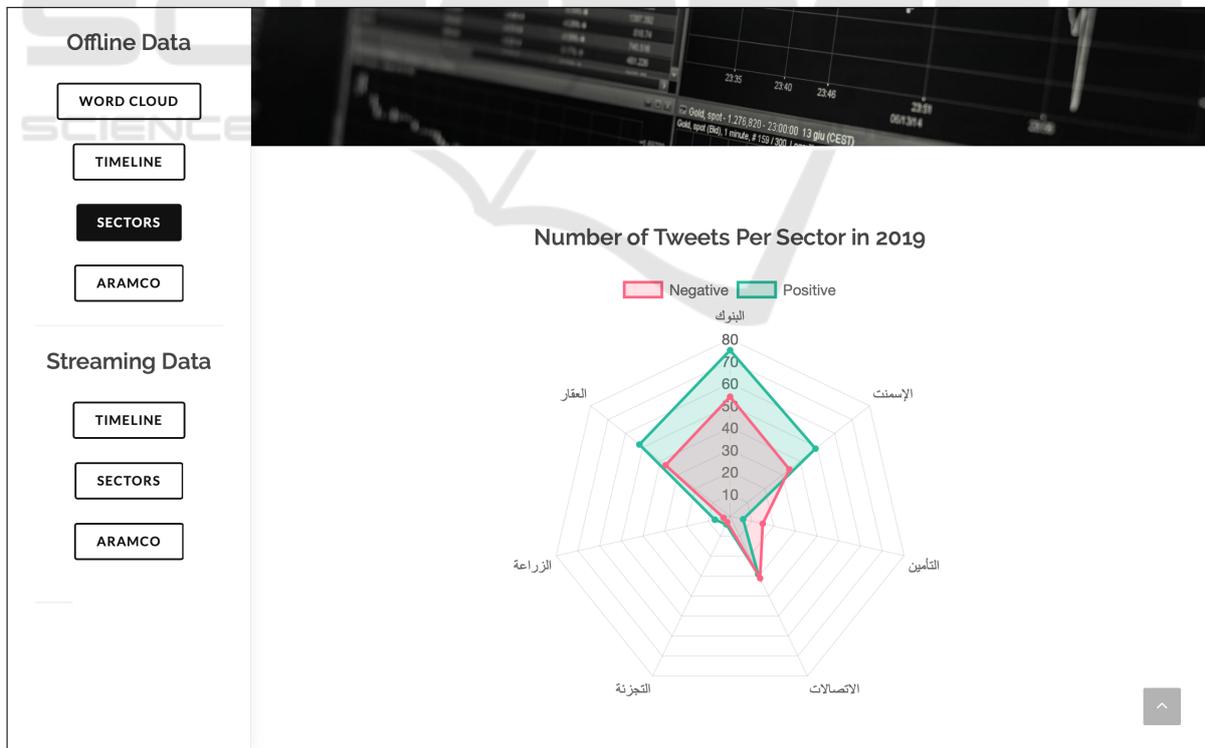


Figure 10: A webpage showing the number of tweets per sector and their sentiments.

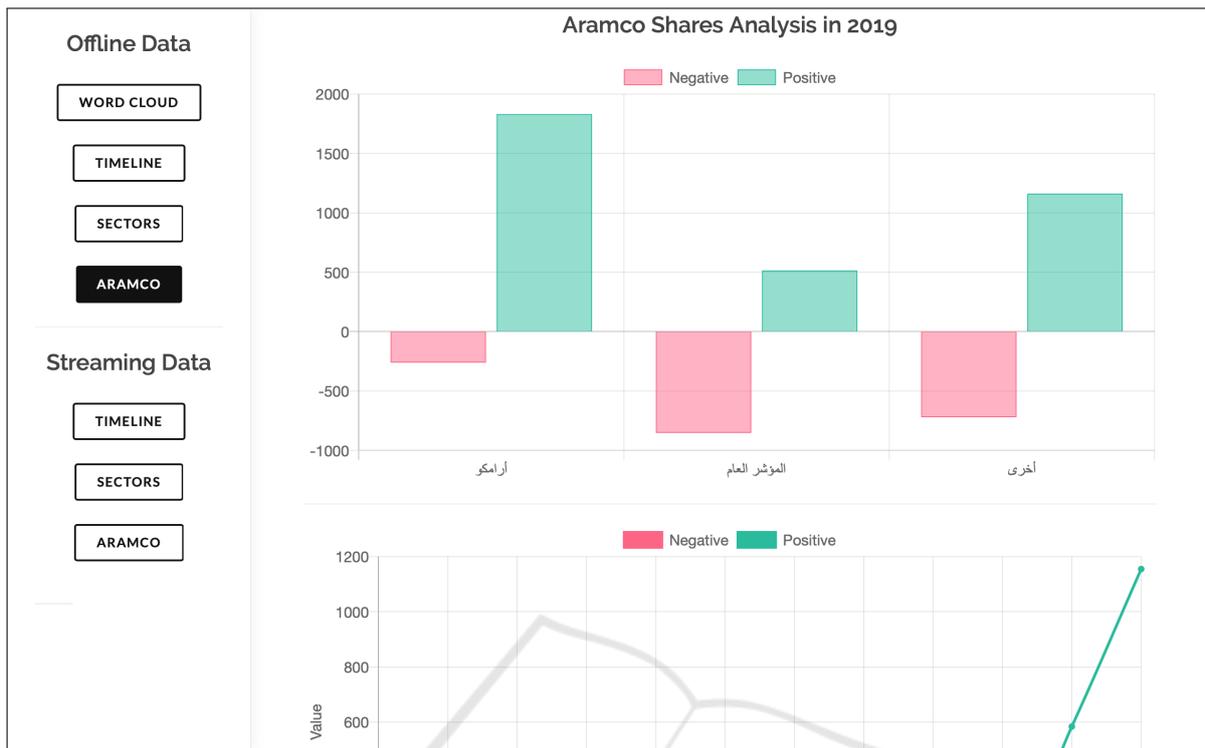


Figure 11: A webpage showing comparisons of Aramco’s number of tweets and their sentiments against TASI and all the other sectors.

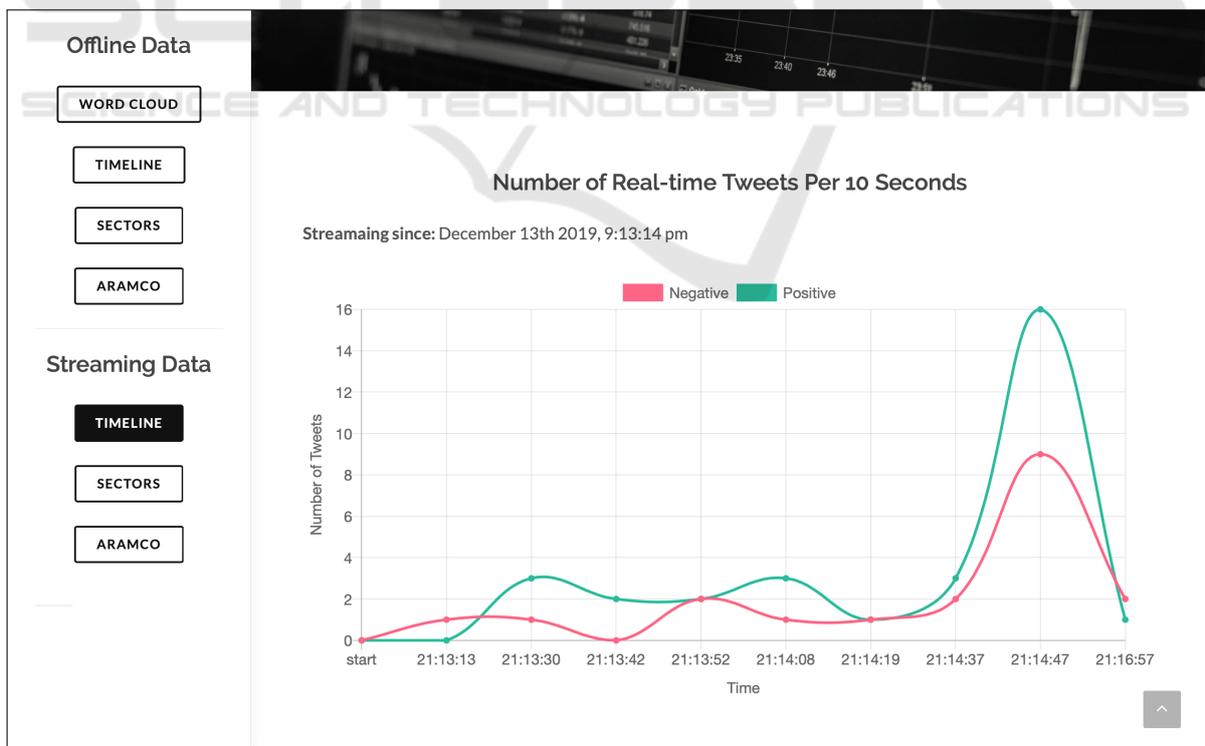


Figure 12: A webpage showing the number of real-time tweets and their sentiments.

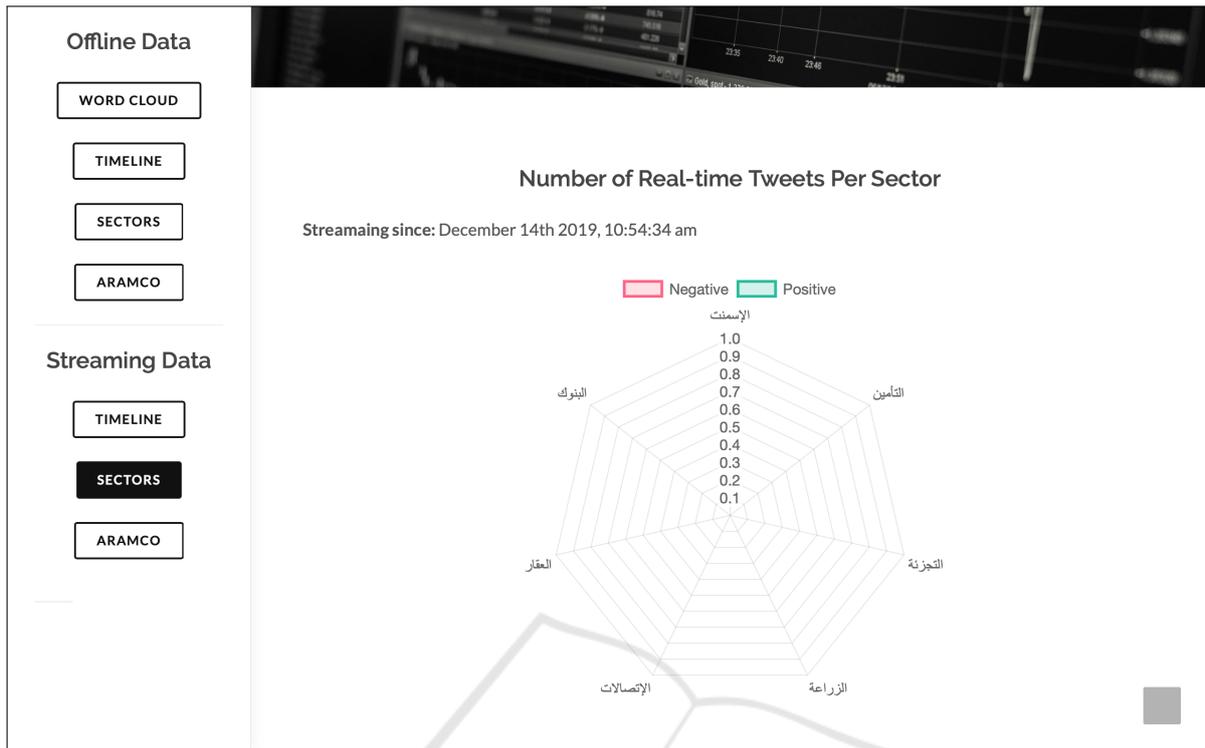


Figure 13: A webpage showing the number of real-time tweets per sector and their sentiments.

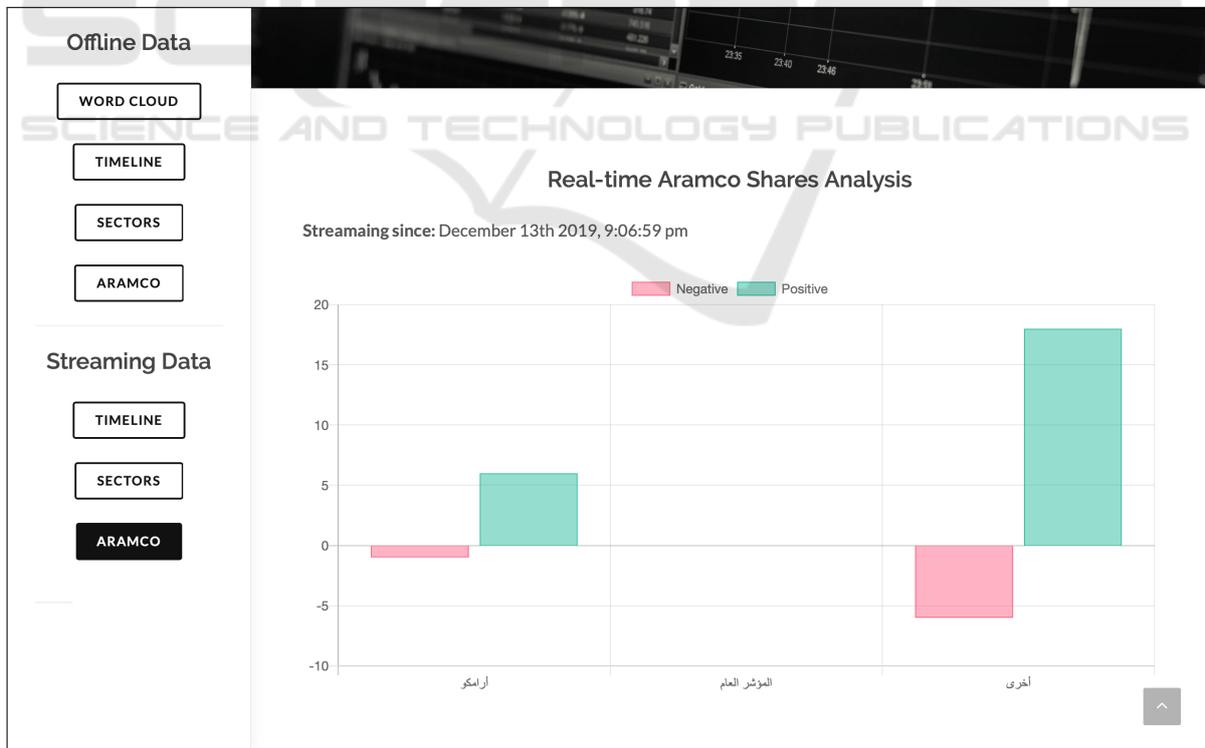


Figure 14: A webpage showing a comparison of Aramco's real-time tweets and their sentiments against TASI and all the other sectors.