

Headline: Why an egg is Instagram's most-liked photo

Kicker: The photo with 30 million likes isn't as out of the blue as we think

Byline: Josh Granovsky

On Sunday night, over 30 million people tapped their Instagram like buttons to propel a small, orange egg to Internet superstardom. The situation makes no sense, but nonsensical Internet news isn't anything out of the ordinary by now.

On Jan. 13, a photo of a freckled and stock photo-ready egg shattered Kylie Jenner's previous record for the most-liked photo on Instagram. The identity of the account owner who posted the ground-breaking photo is currently unknown, though they've already begun selling egg-themed merchandise. It seems you haven't really gone viral until you can be worn on a hoodie.

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Its victory shouldn't be unexpected, and it follows the same blueprint as another famous food which took Twitter by storm two years ago.

In 2017, 16-year-old Carter Wilkinson ascended to similar levels of infamy when his tweet asking Wendy's for chicken nuggets dethroned Ellen DeGeneres—a woman who's worked tirelessly in Hollywood for over 40 years and paved the way for gay representation in media—for the most-retweeted post in Twitter history.

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Taking recognition away from hard-working women like Jenner and DeGeneres—and bestowing it on food—doesn't mean anyone who liked that egg photo should feel bad about it. These are

simply the terms to the Internet that willingly or otherwise, we've all agreed to: sometimes well-planned and deserved content cuts through the noise and rises to the top, sometimes an egg sort of just floats there.

However, the egg's popularity does give us a window into the wants of its Instagram supporters, who, by likes alone, could form a country with roughly the same population as Canada.

We live in a time where viral fame is more attainable than ever. Any one of us could theoretically be a single click away from sharing a post worth 30 million likes.

But we also live in a time where sharing your thoughts publicly has never been scarier. Posting on social media means exposing your ideas to judgement from an endless pool of unknown critics. The prospect of encountering haters—who've become so overwhelmingly common online we don't even have a term to describe supportive commenters—is daunting enough to keep many Internet users as watchers instead of creators.

The egg succeeds because it calms these fears through its affiliation with, well, nothing.

To everyone's knowledge, the egg has no strong political ties, controversial stances, or even any other ingredients. Liking a photo of an egg says absolutely nothing about you as a person, but you still get one slice—a 30 millionth, to be exact—of fame by contributing to a world record.

This accomplishment is nothing but an accomplishment: a way of bringing social media users together under the promise of neutrality. But with hate occupying so much space on the web, achieving neutrality feels like a win in itself.

And so the winner of this entire situation is an egg, who's tragically unable to parlay its viral fame into a worldwide tour or billion-dollar makeup line due to a lack of consciousness. There's a new Instagram champion, rewarded solely for its ability to do the most while saying the least—though if the egg's account's Instagram stories are to be believed, the record holder's rise is "just getting started," according to its Instagram story.

I give the egg a week before it drops a mixtape on Spotify.