

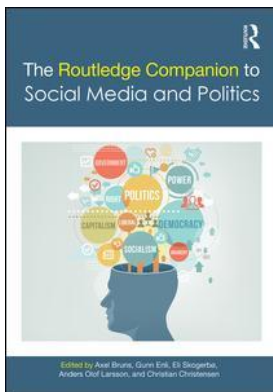
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics

Axel Bruns, Gunn Enli, Eli Skogerbø, Anders Olof Larsson, Christian Christensen

Twitter in Political Campaigns

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch37>

Raquel Recuero, Gabriela Zago, Marco T. Bastos

Published online on: 21 Dec 2015

How to cite :- Raquel Recuero, Gabriela Zago, Marco T. Bastos. 21 Dec 2015, *Twitter in Political Campaigns from: The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics* Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch37>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

37

TWITTER IN POLITICAL
CAMPAIGNS

The Brazilian 2014 Presidential Election

*Raquel Recuero, Gabriela Zago, and
Marco T. Bastos*

Introduction

The turnout in the 2014 election in Brazil was among the highest ever, with over 140 million voters heading to the polls and voting for president, senators, deputies, and governors. The election resulted in intense political campaigning from August to October of 2014, when candidates resorted to television, radio, and the Internet to engage and mobilise potential supporters. While in 2010 social media played a minor role in the political debate (Amoris et al. 2012), in 2014 the political campaigns were expected to hinge on social media affordances, particularly Facebook and Twitter, which have been strongly growing in usage in the country. Social media appear as the most accessed category of websites in Brazil (ComScore 2014). In 2013, Facebook had 66 million unique users in the country whereas Twitter had 11 million. These numbers put Brazil among the top nations using each of the websites.

The 2014 presidential election was a milestone for Brazil's social media ecosystem. It was the first time that all candidates for president created official accounts dedicated to partisan politics both on Twitter and Facebook. Social media were also used as a backchannel for the debates hosted on television, with 'official' hashtags proposed by the networks for the events, and massive monitoring of tweets while the debates occurred. In this context, social media played an important role as a backchannel for discussing the candidates and their political agendas. In this chapter we discuss the intersection between the political campaigns and the audience participation enabled by social media, showing how Twitter both shaped and echoed the campaigns of presidential candidates.

The Brazilian Political Context

Brazil has been a democracy for less than 30 years. Like many of its Latin American neighbours, Brazil was under a military regime from 1964 until 1984. In 1984, protesters across the country took to the streets, fuelled by an economic crisis, and demanded fully democratic elections in what is known as the *Diretas Já* movement that initiated the re-democratisation process. The new constitution was enacted in 1988 and the first direct presidential elections since the 1950s took place in 1989. The free-market advocate Fernando Collor de Mello (National Reconstructive Party; PRN) won the presidential election and started in office with widespread popular support but was impeached in 1992 by the lower house of the Brazilian Congress in the midst of a corruption scandal.

After Collor's impeachment, vice-president Itamar Franco, also from PRN, assumed the presidency until the end of the mandate. Later, former finance minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected. Maintaining a budget surplus and holding down inflation, Cardoso was elected for two terms as president with the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party). This period of relative economic stability continued with the election of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva from the PT (Workers' Party), who continued the strategies of former governments and implemented several social welfare programs to combat extreme poverty, which developed mass consumption in a country with a highly imbalanced social development. Brazil's current president is the successor and protégée of Lula, Dilma Rousseff, the 35th president and only the third president directly elected since Collor in 1989. In 2014, Rousseff was elected for a second term.

The Brazilian Political System

Brazil is a federal presidential constitutional republic constituted of 26 states administered by governors. The federal government has three independent branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The legislative comprises the National Congress, with both an upper chamber, the senate, where each state has three representatives, and a lower chamber, with deputies elected based on the population size of each state and the percentage of votes each party receives. The judiciary is the single branch of government whose highest members are not directly elected but nominated by the executive.

Executive power is exercised by the president as the head of the government and the representative of the state but also includes state governors and city mayors. President, governors, and mayors are directly elected by vote on a multiparty system. Brazilian general elections take place every four years, and the population votes for president, senators, federal deputies, governors, and state deputies. The current president can be re-elected for a second term, and voting is compulsory for citizens between 18 and 60 years old (it has been so since 1932). Individuals between 16 and 18 years can register to vote if they want. Seniors above 60 years also have the option of voting or not voting. Compulsory voting takes place since the promulgation of the first electoral code in the country, in 1932. A second-round runoff election may take place if one candidate for president, state governor, or mayor in cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants does not receive 50 per cent +1 of the total number of valid votes (absolute majority).

Political Campaigns and Social Media

Political campaigns in Brazil are funded from both private and public sources. Television and radio time are allocated to each candidate during the campaigns based on their coalition's share of seats in the National Congress. In 2014, Dilma Rousseff was provided the larger share of TV time due to her party coalitions, with 11 minutes and 24 seconds, followed by Aécio Neves, with four minutes and 35 seconds, and Eduardo Campos, with two minutes and three seconds. All other candidates had one minute or less. Campaigns of major candidates are heavily dependent on private funding due to the rising costs of political campaigns (Souza 2012). These costs may include merchandising, rallies, travelling costs, publicity, and other activities. There is no limit to how much money each candidate may use for their campaign. Candidates are since 1994 obliged to have their campaign accounts checked by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), however.

Although the influence of mandatory political propaganda on television and radio during the campaign period is also a point of contention in the literature, Da Silveira and De Mello (2011) found evidence that TV propaganda played a critical role in the gubernatorial election outcomes in Brazil, with a larger impact among poor and less educated households. According to the authors, the amount of time received by each candidate on TV is likely to have a strong impact on the results. Singer (2001) also agrees that the media have a strong influence on voters' behaviours and points out that the media are also shaping democracy in the country. Despite the sizable body of literature on the role played by the media in the presidential elections since 1989, research covering the interplay between media, political campaigns, and voter behaviour in Brazil is still sparse (Mundin 2010).

The same can be said about studies discussing campaigns and social media's influence on Brazilian elections. Very few works cover this influence, most after 2008 (Amoris et al. 2012), and even fewer focus on Twitter (Bertol, Bacaltchuck, & Mezzaroba 2011). Most directly relevant to this chapter, Cremonese (2012) discussed Twitter's impact on the 2010 presidential election, pointing to its role as a participatory tool for civic engagement. Bachini (2012), examining political strategies on Twitter, argued that opposition parties tend to use the tool in a more participatory way than ruling parties.

The role of social media in political campaigning in other countries, however, has been extensively studied in the past few years, particularly on Twitter (see Bruns & Burgess 2011; Burgess & Bruns 2012; as well as the other chapters in Part III of the present volume). Aragón et al. (2012, 2013) studied Twitter's role during the Spanish elections and found results similar to what Bachini argued: parties tended to use the tool as a one-way communication tool rather than a participatory tool. Burgess and Bruns (2012) examined the use of Twitter for political campaigns and elections and argued that Twitter's structure allows the formation of '*ad hoc* publics', or publics that can share public debates through hashtags and mentions, contributing to political participation.

Other studies have pointed to a strong relationship between social media channels and traditional media, which is also unexplored in Brazil. Kalsnes, Krumsvik, and Storsul (2014) pointed to the strong relationship between television and social media during the campaigns in Norway, describing social media as backchannel. A similar relationship was explored by Towner and Dulio (2011) in the 2008 U.S. elections. but for Facebook and focusing on voter behaviours.

In the remainder of this chapter we explore this dimension of the public sphere, which is at the same time detached from the traditional debate on public opinion and

the public sphere and critical to the formation of new, dispersed, and often politically polarised politics in Brazil, and we further discuss the candidates' strategies on Twitter.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected using yourTwrapperKeeper (yTK), which connects to the Twitter Streaming API and archives tweets relevant to the research. We used yTK to collect tweets from each of the candidates' official accounts on Twitter and to collect all mentions of each of the accounts. The data were collected from July to October 2014. In this study we focus only on a data set of mentions of and activity by the official accounts from 1 August (when candidates started campaigning more strongly) to 26 October (the second-round polling day). The only exception is the candidate Marina Silva, for whom we only started collecting data after a plane crash that killed the then candidate of PSB, Eduardo Campos; data collection for this candidate thus started only after 13 August 2014.

The official accounts were selected based on the following criteria: (1) accounts were recognised by Twitter as 'verified' with the sign used by the company to indicate an official account. This was the case for the top contenders. (2) Accounts were acknowledged by the campaign material as 'official'. (3) Accounts were used by the campaign as official (mentioned by other accounts). Since there were several 'fake' Twitter accounts, we manually checked all accounts that made reference to the candidates to make sure we were collecting the stream of data associated with the official campaign of each of the candidates. Table 37.1 shows the data collected in the period and the candidates for each party.

Data collection was divided into three parts. We collected data for all candidates during the first round and for the runoff candidates during the second round. From this

Table 37.1 Data from Official Twitter Accounts of Presidential Candidates (accounts in bold indicate runoff candidates with data through both rounds)

<i>Party</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Account</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Tweets</i>	<i>Unique users</i>
PSDB	Aécio Neves	@aacioneves	1,089,116	1,600	393,646
PT	Dilma Rouseff	@dilmabr	914,859	1,358	429,829
PSB	Marina Silva	@silva_marina	505,675	1,711	228,524
PSOL	Luciana Genro	@lucianagenro	162,173	2,311	162,173
PSDC	Everaldo	@Everaldo_20	16,103	401	10,993
PV	Eduardo Jorge	@eduardojorge43	821	932	463
PRTB	Levy Fidélis	@levyfidelis	35,594	348	24,911
PCO	Rui Pimenta	@ruipimenta29	474	251	304
PSTU	Zé Maria	@zemaria_pstu	4,022	462	2,343
PCB	Mauro Iasi	@MauroIasi	2,110	224	1,289
PSC	Eymael	@eymaeloficial	8,261	4,722	5,864

data set we selected the 10 most retweeted tweets mentioning each candidate as well as their 10 most active retweeters (users who frequently retweeted their content), and the accounts that most often cited the official accounts. We analysed the content of each tweet, and the profiles of the accounts involved in cross-mentioning and retweeting activity. Second, we collected weekly follower data from the official Twitter accounts of each candidate from August to October 2014. Third, we monitored Twitter hashtags and keywords associated with the debates and major campaign events and noted user participation through participant observation of Twitter feeds during the debates and major election events (such as the public, real-time vote count published by the Superior Electoral Court).

The data on the 10 most retweeted tweets provide insights on the repercussions of each campaign and on how users perceived the candidates online. We manually classified the accounts that made the most retweeted tweets in the following categories:

Campaign: the tweet was posted by a campaign account (a Twitter account directly involved in the campaign, such as the candidate's official account, the party's official account, or accounts created by campaign staff).

News: the tweet was posted by a news organisation. These tweets are usually part of the live coverage of debates and campaign events.

Celebrity supporters: the tweet was posted by a user with more than 10 thousand followers who supported the candidate.

Ordinary supporters: the tweet was posted by an everyday account that supported the candidate, but the user is not popular (mostly such accounts had fewer than two thousand followers, but all accounts with fewer than 10 thousand followers were considered in this category).

Fake/humouristic: the tweet is a joke posted by a fake or humouristic account.

Opponents: the tweet was posted by a political adversary or an account affiliated with the political opposition.

Results of the Election

The first round of the 2014 general Brazilian election took place on 5 October 2014, followed by the second round on 26 October. Brazilians voted for president, federal deputies, senators, governors, and state deputies. For the purposes of this study, we focus only on the presidential vote, which included 11 candidates. The campaign started officially on 6 June, with free television and radio airtime starting on 19 August. The onset of the presidential race included current president Dilma Rousseff from the Workers' Party (PT), senator Aécio Neves from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), current governor of the state of Pernambuco Eduardo Campos from the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), Luciana Genro from the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), Everaldo Pereira from the Christian Social Party (PSC), Eduardo Jorge from the Green Party (PV), José Eymael from the Christian Social Democratic Party (PSDC), José Maria de Almeida from the United Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU), Levy Fidelix from the Brazilian Labour Renewal Party (PRTB), Rui Pimenta from the Workers' Cause Party (PCO), and Mauro Iasi from the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB).

Of the 11 candidates, only three received more than 10 per cent of the intended vote in the opinion polls, namely, Dilma Rousseff, Aécio Neves, and Eduardo Campos.

Luciana Genro, Everaldo Pereira, and Eduardo Jorge followed with 1 per cent of votes. Amongst the three more popular candidates, Dilma Rousseff was the first in the polls, followed by Aécio Neves and Eduardo Campos (see Figure 37.1). The presidential race changed greatly after the fatal plane crash of PSB candidate Eduardo Campos on 13 August, only six days before the radio and TV campaign started (BBC, 2014a). Campos had just given his first national television interview for *Jornal Nacional* (on Globo Network) the night before, and was flying in a private jet to attend another interview in Santos City. Campos's vice-presidential candidate, former senator Marina Silva, was soon announced as the new candidate.

The general commotion about Campos's death and announcement of Silva's candidacy contributed to give the party more visibility. While at the time of the accident Campos had less than a 10 per cent share in the opinion polls, polls following the crash showed Silva at more than 21 per cent. In fact, Silva quickly became a strong candidate with polls constantly showing her growth and advancement over the favourite candidate, president Dilma Rousseff. But by the middle of September, after a sequence of debates on TV and on social media, the polls indicated that Silva's candidacy was plummeting while Neves's was taking off. Part of the decline of Silva's campaign was credited to the several changes in her government plan and positions throughout the campaign, mostly caused by internal disputes within the Socialist Party (BBC, 2014b). Neves, on the other hand, remained the strongest option for those opposed to the Workers' Party, which had been in power for the last 12 years. At the end of the first round Neves amassed 34 per cent of the vote, and Dilma Rousseff had 42 per cent of the vote. Silva fell short with only 21 per cent of the vote, and the rest of the candidates combined gained less than 5 per cent of the vote.

During the second round, the campaign intensified and became increasingly polarised. Due to the growing opposition between the two presidential candidates, Neves (PSDB) and Rousseff (PT), social media and mainstream media experienced increasing levels of partisan politics. The population at large became intensely involved, and the flow of news associated with the election on social media was unprecedented. Neves received support from defeated first-round candidates, including Eduardo Jorge (PV), Levy Fidelix (PRTB), Everaldo (PSC), and Marina Silva (PSB).

Since mid-October, election polls showed voters divided between the two remaining candidates. The first second-round polls gave an edge to Neves (PSDB), closely followed by Rousseff (PT). However, after 15 October, the lead changed back to Rousseff, followed closely by Neves. On 23 October, another poll showed Neves taking the lead again. These results only changed in the final polls, which showed Rousseff as the frontrunner, for the first time beyond the margin of error. These oscillations in the polls were arguably an effect of the multiple debates between the two candidates, promoted by television networks and transmitted online (Tavares et al. 2014). On 26 October, Dilma Rousseff (PT) was re-elected with 51.6 per cent of the total number of valid votes, with little more than 54 million votes against 51 million for Neves (48.3 per cent), one of the smallest margins in Brazilian election history. She was immediately announced as the next president by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE 2014).

The 2014 Presidential Campaign on Twitter

Although all candidates had dedicated Twitter accounts prior to the general election, account activity was minimal to non-existent (Aécio Neves's Twitter account did not

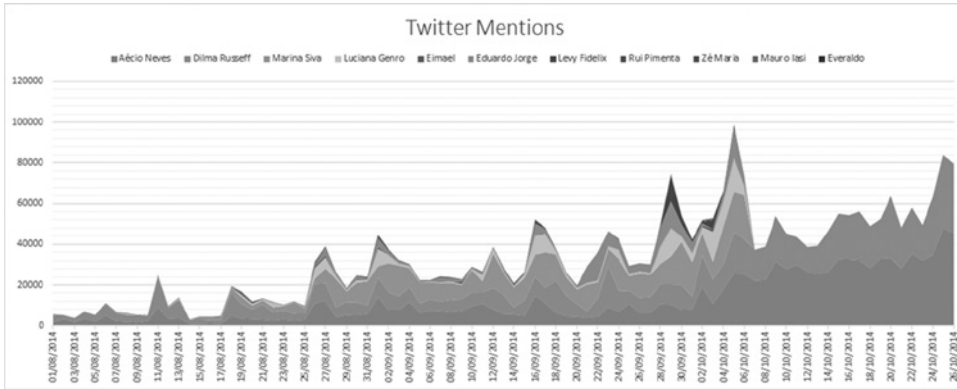


Figure 37.1 Number of Mentions per Candidate per Day

post any tweets in the run-up to the election). Twitter was a central backchannel for the discussion. During the election period, we collected more than five million tweets related to the event, and voter participation increased as the final round approached. There were peaks of participation during major campaign events, particularly during the debates broadcast on television. Figure 37.1 shows the daily number of Twitter mentions for each the candidates’ ‘official’ accounts between 1 August and 5 October (first round) and 6 October and 26 October (second round).

The spikes shown in Figure 37.1 indicate the date of the debates on TV, with the first round debates having occurred on 26 August (Bandeirantes Network), 1 September (SBT Network), 16 September (Aparecida TV), 28 September (Record Network), and 2 October (Globo Network). Debates for the second round occurred on 14 October (Bandeirantes Network), 16 October (SBT Network), 19 October (Record Network), and 24 October (Globo Network). Each debate had an ‘official’ hashtag assigned by the broadcaster. Only candidates from parties with a seat in the Congress were invited for the debates (thus, only PSDB, PT, PV, PSOL, PRTB, and PSC). The exception is the candidate from PSDC (Christian Party) who was also invited for the debate on the Aparecida TV (the Christian Network). Supporters of the leading candidates (PT, PSDB, and PSB) also introduced their own set of hashtags in support of their candidates, and promoted several *tuitaços* (coordinated mass manifestation on Twitter), thus pushing hashtags such as #Aécio45 (in support of Neves), #DilmaMaisEmprego (more jobs with Dilma Rousseff), #SouMarina40 (I’m with Marina), which often showed up amongst Brazilian Twitter’s trending topics.

Figures 37.1 and 37.2 show how Twitter and TV were intertwined during the elections, as the increase in the number of mentions coincides with the debate dates. This is a strong indication that visibility on TV has considerable impact on Twitter mentions. During the first debate, Rousseff (PT) and Neves (PSDB) increased their number of mentions by 238 per cent and 300 per cent, respectively, while Silva (PSB) increased her mentions by 141 per cent.

The relative figures are even higher for independent candidates, with Genro (PSOL) increasing her mentions by 1,105 per cent, Eduardo Jorge (PV) by 830 per cent, and Pastor Everaldo (PSC) by 435 per cent. The same pattern is observed in the follower

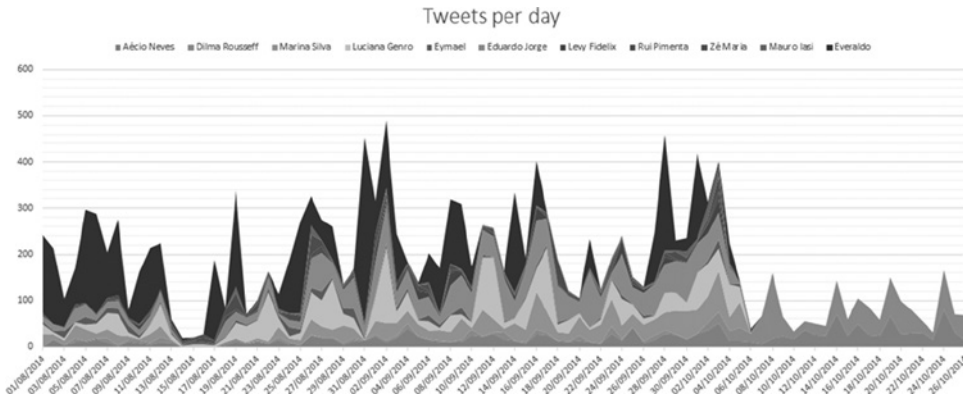


Figure 37.2 Number of Tweets per Candidate per Day

growth. The traction gained online by independent candidates is potentially a result of their growing Twitter follower numbers during the debates (even though their usernames did not appear on screen during these events). During the first round, independent candidates such as Jorge and Genro reported the most impressive follower growth, while established contenders such as Rousseff (PT) only grew their audience by 5 per cent. On the other hand, Neves (PSDB) grew his following considerably during the second round (by 94 per cent), from 107,000 to 208,000 followers. Rousseff kept a lower growth rate during the second term and added only 80,000 followers (2.9 per cent) to her 2,835,164 followers, likely due to the fact that her account was long-established and already had much larger following than the accounts of her adversaries.

We also mapped the Twitter activities of each of the official accounts of the candidates (see Figure 37.2). While Rousseff (PT) and Neves (PSDB) posted 1,358 and 1,600 tweets between 1 August and 26 October (both rounds), they were surpassed by the account of Eymael (PSC), who posted 4,722 tweets, Jorge (PV) with 2,630 tweets, Genro (PSOL) with 2,311 tweets, and Silva (PSB) with 1,711 posted during the first-round period only. Although the number of tweets posted does not correlate with audience interactivity (@mentions received), it seems to indicate that Twitter provided a more participative platform for campaigning, especially for minority parties with less time on TV and radio. Additionally, our data show that the most participative candidates online were those with less time on TV and radio (PRTB, PV, PSOL). Minority political parties engaged more intensely with their Twitter followers during the campaign, especially during television debates. During the second round, participation by the major candidates increased heavily, indicating that they adopted a stronger presence on Twitter.

Retweet Behaviour

We further analysed the retweets from each data set (retweets by the candidates and retweets mentioning the candidates) to try to uncover part of the candidates' strategies on Twitter. Here, we examine more closely the data from the three major candidates (Neves, Rousseff, and Silva), and discuss more generally the less popular candidates.

Retweet behaviour among the accounts was very different. The Neves (PSDB) account, for example, had the lowest percentage of retweets amongst its tweets, with only 3.7 per cent of the total number of tweets, while Rousseff (PT) had 8.7 per cent and Silva (PSB) 12.5 per cent. While these accounts privileged their own content rather than that of others, Silva and Rousseff also gave visibility to tweets from celebrity supporters and partisan accounts. These numbers are rather different from those for the less popular parties, even though they had more Twitter activity (as Figure 37.2 shows).

Of the tweets posted by PSTU, for example, 35.4 per cent were retweets; so were 32.5 per cent of PCO's and 21 per cent of PCB's tweets. These parties retweeted more ordinary supporters, celebrity supporters and news tweets, giving more visibility to other users' content. This retweet strategy may also have helped to keep the account more active when the party had fewer resources. PSOL, PV, and PSDC differ from this pattern as they have a larger number of tweets and a smaller percentile of retweets (6.1 per cent, 10.4 per cent, and 1.3 per cent, respectively), and thus are also privileging their own content and being largely active during the campaign. When retweeting, they seem to have used the same strategy as the more popular parties, retweeting celebrity supporters, news, and campaign accounts. In this case, it seems that these parties (with fewer resources than the major parties) invested more of their campaigning efforts in Twitter, hoping to gain and keep more visibility through social media. PRTB is the exception, with a small amount of tweets and a small amount of retweets (7.2 per cent), mostly of ordinary supporters.

The most active retweeters of candidates were ordinary supporters and partisan campaign accounts (e.g. @psdbba for Neves, @ptbrasil for Rousseff, @40presidente for Silva). Interestingly, some of the top retweeters were not supporters but opponents of the candidates, which is indicative of the non-endorsement nature of their retweets, especially in relation to Rousseff's account. Their actions, however, still increased that account's visibility.

Mentions

Our data show that most mentions of Neves (PSDB) came from partisan campaign Twitter accounts and news organisations. Mentions of Rousseff (PT) are considerably more diverse, although they also included partisan campaign accounts, news organisations and comedians (humourous accounts). Mentions of Silva (PSB) follow a similar pattern. Partisan Twitter accounts were particularly prevalent in mentions of candidates affiliated with minority parties, and candidates who participated on broadcast debates were also the object of the tweets posted by humouristic and fake accounts. Eduardo Jorge (PV) and Levy Fidélis (PRTB), in particular, were the objects of a number of humoristic Twitter accounts, from fakes to Web celebrities.

These data show that news organisations played an important role in providing visibility to the candidates on Twitter. However, this influence seems to be tied to the presence of the candidates during the debates. Candidates from PSTU, PSDC, PCB, and PCO received far fewer tweets from the mass media, while candidates from PT, PSDB, PSB, PSOL, PRTB, and PSC were the objects of a much greater number of tweets. The PSDB campaign seems to have relied more heavily on gaining visibility through retweets from other partisan campaign accounts. A large majority of its retweets fall within this category.

Nonetheless, Neves's tweets were replicated by a much smaller user base compared to the messages tweeted by Rousseff (PT) or Silva (PSB). Conversely, the messages by Rousseff (PT) and Silva (PSB) attracted more celebrities and elite users, who helped

spread their tweets, compared to those of Neves (PSDB). Perhaps expectedly, candidates of minority parties received less media coverage and more exposure from partisan Twitter accounts, which is indicative of the grassroots nature of their campaigns.

We also examined the 10 most retweeted messages mentioning each of the candidates. We analysed the political affiliation of the source of the tweet and the users who retweeted it, and found that the most retweeted messages for the top three contenders were from their own official accounts, followed by celebrity supporters and news organisations. Tweets from official accounts mostly focused on positive messages about the candidates, with a fitting example coming from Neves's (PSDB) account:

@AecioNeves: We continue to believe, as I always have, that it is possible to give the country decent and efficient government #Aecio45

This sentence is actually a verbatim reproduction of the candidate's campaign slogan.

Tweets from the mass media focused mostly on Rousseff's (PT) account, were predominantly negative, and largely retweeted by the opposition. A fitting example is the most retweeted tweet from the mass media:

@OGloboPolitica: Audience laughs when @dilmabr says inflation is under control [link]

The tweet refers to the live broadcast of one of the presidential debates, where the president was constantly asked about the prospects of inflation in the country, and stressed the audience's disbelief of the president's response.

Celebrity tweets proved to cut both ways. For example, one of the most retweeted messages citing Rousseff showed filmmaker Oliver Stone supporting her platform:

@TheOliverStone: #Brazil don't forget to vote for President #DilmaRoussef @dilmabr on Sun 26/10. Do not go backwards to the past!

Also through Twitter, Silva (PSB) received the support of international celebrity and vocal environmentalist Mark Ruffalo, who posted a video on YouTube supporting her candidacy based on her environmental platform. However, upon being informed of her position about marriage equality, Ruffalo publicly withdrew support by tweeting

@MarkRuffalo: @silva_marina Are you pro marriage equality?

The message was one of the most retweeted in our Silva data set (over 2,000 retweets as of 7 November).

It is also important to highlight the occurrence of opposing views within some of the most retweeted tweets associated with the candidates. This was particularly the case with PRTB's candidate Levy Fidélis. During one of the broadcast presidential debates, Fidélis voiced several strong, often offensive, and potentially libellous opinions against LGBT rights that were met with a strong response on Twitter. The second most retweeted message mentioning the candidate read:

Opinion my ass . . . there should be no place for homophobia. If you are homophobic you should go to jail! @LevyFidelix should be arrested!

Several similar tweets were among the most retweeted in his data set, together with a long list of derogatory jokes about the candidate.

Conclusion

Our data show a massive use of Twitter during the 2014 presidential election in Brazil, both by voters (through mentions) and by candidates (through tweets). Usage increased as an effect of major campaign events, particularly broadcast presidential debates. Twitter played a critical role as a backchannel during television debates by allowing voters to discuss the unfolding debate and enabling non-participating candidates to contribute their remarks using the 'official' debate hashtags. Mainstream media in Brazil proved to have a fairly acute understanding of the formation of *ad hoc* publics and advocated the use of hashtags dedicated to the debates even before the debates went to air. This is consistent with previous research covering the relationship between social media and mainstream media (Bruns & Burgess 2011; Towner & Dulio 2011) and indicates the existence of an intricate ecosystem between social and traditional media in electoral campaigns (Kalsnes, Krumsvik &, Storsul 2014).

The debates around the several hashtags proposed by candidates and television networks seem to contribute to the formation of *ad hoc* publics (Bruns & Burgess 2011). These publics not only allowed candidates who did not appear at these events to participate and gather attention from the conversation, but also provided a space for these conversations to happen (Cremonese 2012), thus generating a spike in mentions for the candidates.

Also consistent with previous research (Aragón et al. 2013; Bachini 2012), we found considerably different strategies associated with Twitter from each of the political parties campaigning. Top contenders resorted to the platform less often, while candidates with less free time on television and radio found on Twitter a valuable communication channel. Perhaps surprisingly, these strategies changed considerably in the second round, when the two remaining contenders resorted heavily to Twitter. PSOL and PV, for example, are minority parties with some of the most active accounts in our data set. While the growth of their mentions seems to be directly connected to participation in television debates, they were also very successful at campaigning on Twitter. In relative terms, they proved able to grow their audiences at a much greater rate than the top contenders. Eduardo Jorge from PV increased his following from a few hundred to more than 100,000 followers over the period, and together with other independent candidates received a large proportion of mentions (see Figure 37.1). These grassroots strategies were also more informal, and most of the retweets relied on partisan supporters rather than on campaign accounts managed by public relation teams.

The differences between the social media strategies adopted by the two top contenders point to the interplay between social media and politics in Brazil. The PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party) campaign deployed dedicated Twitter accounts to retweet the content of the main account, a strategy that walks a fine line towards astroturfing by drawing on a relatively small user base to retweet the main account and provide more exposure to the candidate. Overall, official tweets comprised most of the most retweeted messages for the PSDB campaign. The party also emphasised the role of celebrity supporters, although the official account of Neves was much less active on Twitter compared to those of the other candidates, only showing strong activity during

the second round. On the other hand, the PT (Workers' Party) Twitter data show a shared space with news about the current government, which offered an important selling point as its candidate was the incumbent president. Although the account was active long before the campaign started, celebrity supporters, news outlets and partisan campaign accounts played an important role in mentioning Rousseff and increasing her exposure. PT's candidate account was the second most cited, and the one with the largest number of unique users citing it (see Table 37.1). Nonetheless, the account was on average also less active compared to the other candidates, growing only during the second round.

This chapter has presented an overview of the relationship between social media and political campaigns in Brazil. Further research will be able to shed light on other aspects not covered here, such as the role of Facebook in elections, the use of social media in political campaigns in other countries, or the connections between voting behaviour and Twitter use. Social media may play an even more crucial role in future elections in Brazil, especially in the minor election rounds in 2016, when campaign funding will be more limited.

Note

This chapter is a research output from the project Mapeando as conversações em rede das Eleições Presidenciais de 2014, funded by CNPq (National Scientific Development Council) under the number 408650/2013-3.

References

-
- Amoris, V., Gollner, A. P., Goulart, E., and Pessoni, A. (2012) "Marketing político e redes sociais: reflexos nas eleições 2010 à presidência da República," in A. Queiroz, C. Françoço, P. Tomaziello, and R. Macedo (eds.) *Comunicação política e eleitoral no Brasil: Perspectivas e limitações no dinamismo político*, Americana, SP: Politicom. pp. 140–157.
- Aragón, P., Kappler, K., Kaltenbrunner, A., Neff, J., Laniado, D., and Volkovich, Y. (2012) "Tweeting the campaign. Evaluation of the Strategies performed by Spanish Political Parties on twitter for the 2011 National Elections," *Internet, Politics, Policy 2012*, Barcelona.
- Aragón, P., Kappler, K., Kaltenbrunner, A., Neff, J., Laniado, D., and Volkovich, Y. (2013) "Communication dynamics in Twitter during political campaigns: The case of the 2011 Spanish national election," *Policy & Internet*, 5(2), pp. 183–206.
- Bachini, N. (2012) "As cibercampanhas no Brasil: uma análise dos Twitters de Dilma, Serra e Marina em 2010," *Ponto-e-Vírgula*, 12(1), pp. 135–164.
- BBC (2014a) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-28778604>
- BBC (2014b) http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/10/141003_marina_queda_ru
- Bertol, S., Bacaltchuck, B., and Mezzaroba, M. (2011) "A Campanha Eleitoral na Internet: Uma análise do Twitter dos candidatos à presidency Dilma Rousseff e José Serra," *Democracia Digital e Governo Eletrônico*, 3(5), pp. 172–185.
- Bruns, A. and Burgess, J. (2011) "#ausvotes: How Twitter covered the 2010 Australian federal election," *Communication, Politics & Culture*, 4(2).
- Burgess, J. and Bruns, A. (2012) "(Not) the Twitter election: The dynamics of the #ausvotes conversation in relation to the Australian media ecology," *Journalism Practice*, 6(3).
- ComScore (2014) *2014 Brazil digital future in focus*, <http://www.comscore.com/por/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2014/2014-Brazil-Digital-Future-in-Focus-Webinar>
- Cremonese, D. (2012) "Política on-line: a utilização do Twitter como ferramenta de capital social nas eleições presidenciais de 2010," *Sociedade e Cultura*, 15(1), pp. 135–149.

- Da Silveira, B. S., & De Mello, J.M.P. (2011). "Campaign advertising and election outcomes: Quasi-natural experiment evidence from gubernatorial elections in Brazil," *Review of Economic Studies*, 78(2), pp. 590–612.
- Kalsnes, B., Krumsvik, A. H., and Storsul, T. (2014). "Social media as a political backchannel: Twitter use during televised election debates in Norway," *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 66(3), pp. 313–328.
- Mundin, P. (2010) "Cientistas Políticos, Comunicólogos e o Papel da Mídia nas Teorias da Decisão do Voto," *Revista Política Hoje*, 19(2).
- Singer, A. (2001) "Mídia e Democracia no Brasil," *Revista USP*, 48.
- Souza, C. R. (2012) "Parties and electoral campaigns financing in Brazil: A review of legislation," in *Proceedings of XXII IPSA World Congress of Political Science*, Madrid.
- Tavares et al. (2014) "Dilma X Aécio: A eleição que divide o Brasil," *Revista Época*, <http://epoca.globo.com/tempo/eleicoes/noticia/2014/10/bdilma-x-aeciob-eleicao-que-divide-o-brasil.html>
- Towner, T. and Dulio, D. (2011) "The Web 2.0 election: Does the online medium matter?," *The Journal of Political Marketing*, 10(1 & 2), pp. 165–188.
- TSE (2014) <http://www.tse.jus.br/noticias-tse/2014/Outubro/presidente-do-tse-anuncia-que-dilma-rousseff-foi-reeleita-presidente-da-republica>