Twitter Discourse Analysis of US President Donald Trump

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Abstract. Twitter has become a very powerful channel of political communication in recent years, many times overtaking, along with Facebook, traditional channels of mass communication, such as: TV, radio or newspapers. More than 500 million tweets are sent every day (5,787 tweets every second), and 326 million people use Twitter every month, even if there are 1.3 billion Twitter accounts. From the perspective of political communication, Twitter is ahead of Facebook, according to a study conducted in 2018 by Twiplomacy, which shows that 187 governments and heads of state maintain an official presence on Twitter. This mechanism of mass communication has benefited the politicians, especially those in the United States of America, who have generated a unique phenomenon in political communication: creating a map on polarization in the online environment.. This study focused on analyzing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that facilitate Twitter Communication of Donald Trump, the President of United States of America (number of followers, types of tweets, engagement rate and interaction rate etc.) and analyzing Donald Trump's Twitter speech and identify the most commonly used expressions in Social Media during the term of President. The monitoring period is 22.01.2019 - 16.08.2019.

Keywords. Donald Trump; US President; Social Media; Political communication; Twitter, push-push-pull communication

1. Introduction

Twitter has become a very powerful channel of political communication in recent years, many times overtaking, along with Facebook, traditional channels of mass communication, such as: TV, radio or newspapers.

According to Hootsuite (2019), 500 million tweets are sent every day (5,787 tweets every second), and 326 million people use Twitter every month, even if there are 1.3 billion Twitter accounts. At the same time, 24% of US adults use Twitter, but only 6% of US teens say Twitter is the most important social network. Interestingly, although the average Twitter user has 707 followers, but 391 million Twitter accounts have no followers at all.

From the perspective of political communication, Twitter is ahead of Facebook, according to a study conducted in 2018 by Twiplomacy, which shows that 187 governments and heads of state maintain an official presence on Twitter.

According to several researchers, Twitter is the channel with the highest rate of viralization. Kathryn Kloby (2012) states that "tweets are famous for their brevity, but readers are often amazed to see how much information can actually be shared concisely within the confines of the site's 140 character-per-post limit." In her opinion, the motivation behind Twitter's character limit - an entire Tweet fitting within a standard SMS message - is also what drove the platform to mass popularity. More than that, according to Brian Ott (2017), Twitter promotes impulsivity. "While Twitter is similar to smoke signals in terms of message complexity, it is utterly dissimilar in terms of effort. When one decides to send a smoke signal, they must go to considerable effort (i.e. gathering wood, building a fire, and going to a location where the smoke can be seen at a great distance). If one chooses to go to all that effort, presumably she or he has something important to communicate and, in fact, smoke signals have historically been used as a means of signaling impending danger. Tweeting, by contrast, requires almost no effort at all. It is ridiculously easy. Thanks to wireless technology, one can tweet from virtually anywhere at any time. Since tweeting requires little effort, it requires little forethought, reflection, or consideration of consequences. Tweeting is, in short, a highly impulsive activity, something that one can do easily even if one has nothing considered or important to say" (Ott, 2017).

Twitter became popular thanks to an easy mass communication mechanism, which Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) called "push-push-pull communication", which they described as follows: "Once a user contends the tweets of Another person as particularly relevant or interesting, she can decide to become a 'follower' of that person. Following implies that one author's tweets are automatically pushed onto the Twitter main page of all followers. [...] In many cases, the information pushed to a user's followers may be read and immediately forgotten; in other cases, it may not even be read at all. Given that tweets are not directed to a particular user but to the entire world, each individual follower feels a much weaker urge to react than - for example - in the case of a traditional email. But in some cases, the recipient of the message may find the news so interesting and intriguing that they decide to give it an additional push by re-tweeting it. to their own follow ers The initial tweet can then cascade down from one user's follower network to another's, and on the way transform from a simple bit of information to word-of-mouth. Specifically, when the initial message has been sent out by a company, this transformation of a commercial message into 'buzz' can substantially increase its impact and credibility. (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2011).

This mechanism of mass communication has benefited the politicians, especially those in the United States of America, who have generated a unique phenomenon in political communication: creating a map on polarization in the online environment.

Figure 1 - Maps of Twitter activity show how political polarization manifests online and why divides are so hard to bridge.

According to the above map (Kelly, Francois, 2018), each circle is a Twitter account; its size represents the number of followers and the color reflects the kind of content. Thus, (1) the blue color of the West Coast represents the group "Resist" (anti-Trump), (2) the "purple" color of the Center-West and South-West is representative of the progressive movement, (3) the orange color of the South it is represented by mainstream users (left journos), (4) the yellow color of the Center-West is represented by the supporters of the Democratic Party, (5) the turquoise color of the Center is represented by the local news affiliated accounts, (6) the green color from the Center is represented by Party politics, (7) the red color in the Northeast is represented by Donald Trump support groups, (8) the green color in the Central-East and South-East is represented by the Conservative media, (9) the purple color in the Center - East is represented by the supporters of the Republican Party, and (10) the orange color of Center, East and West is represented by other groups.

2 Analysis of Donald Trump's Twitter speech (January 22, 2019 - August 16, 2019)

2.1. Research objectives

O1: Analyzing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that facilitate Twitter Communication of Donald Trump, the President of United States of America (number of followers, types of tweets, engagement rate and interaction rate etc.)

O2: Analyzing Donald Trump's Twitter speech and identify the most commonly used expressions

2.2. Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, we will use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, we will analyze the key performance indicators (KPIs) that facilitate Donald Trump's Twitter communication strategy, namely: the number of tweets, the number of daily twtters, the engagement rate etc. At the same time, using the text analysis platform - <https://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp> - we will centralize and analyze the most commonly used words and expressions on Donald Trump's Twitter, in order to determines the communication directions used during the term of president. The monitoring period is 22.01.2019 - 16.08.2019.

2.3. Centralization and data analysis

Twitter's followers evolution

Figure 2 - Evolution of the followers on Donald Trump's Twitter

Starting with January 22, 2019, Donald Trump's Twitter profile has been steadily rising - from 57.6 million to 63.2 million followers, on August 16, 2019. Thus, we can see an average weekly increase of

0.32%. At the same time, Donald Trump posts on Twitter, on average, 16 tweets per day, the engagement rate is 2.1%, and the tweet interaction rate is 0.14%.

<i>Type</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
New content	1991	61.56%
Reshared content	963	29.78%
Replies to others	280	8.66%
Total	3,234	

The 3,234 tweets posted by Donald Trump generated a total of 218.4 million likes and 49.7 million retweets. Six out of ten tweets (61.56%) are original content, 29.78% represent reshared content, and 8.66% represent replies to followers. At the same time, 76.2% of the posts are made up of pure text, 12.1% contain picture and 11.3% contain link.

Democrats vs. Republicans in Donald Trump's Twitter speech

For analysis, we will only consider expressions that contain at most 4 words, to determine the key messages most commonly used in Donald Trump's Twitter speech. During the mentioned period, in the 3,234 posts, Donald Trump uses 100,556 words, which means, on average, 31.1 words per post and a number of 9,277 sentences, which represents an average of 2.87 sentences per post (relatively long posts).

The Democrats, Donald Trump's opposition party, appear in the president's speech, on the Twitter profile, 608 out of a total of 3,234 posts (18.80%), and his party, Republicans, 64 times out of a total of 3,234 posts (1.98%). Moreover, most often we can see the term Democrats mentioned in the following expressions: "the radical left democrats" (17 times), "committed by the democrats" (5 times), "what the democrats are" (4 times) or "the radical left democrats want" (4 times). On the other hand, Donald Trump most often mentions the term Republicans in the following terms: "republicans will always support pre existing" (2 times) and "republicans and democrats must come together" (2 times).

<i>Words</i>	<i>Avg. Likes</i>	<i>Avg. Retweets</i>
<i>Democrats</i>	71,775	21,380
<i>Republicans</i>	81,726	20,204
<i>Republicans & Democrats</i>	76,920	19,371

When he used the term "Democrats" in his tweets, we can see an average of the interactions, as follows: 71,775 likes and 21,380 retweets. On the other hand, the term "Republicans" generated an average of reactions, as follows: 81,726 likes and 20,204 retweets. Both parties - "Democrats" and "Republicans" - are used in the same posting, in 28 of the cases, generating an average fan interactions per tweet as follows: 76,920 likes and 19,371 retweets.

From the chart bellow, we can see that when he used the term "democrats", there are less likes then the tweets when he used the term "republicans".

Figure 3 - Democrats vs. Republicans in Donald Trump's tweets

Fake Twitter users interacts with Donald Trump's tweets

During the monitored period (January 22 - August 16, 2019), 313 users distributed information on Donald Trump's profile. 207 users (66.13%) are verified by Twitter's security system and are considered valid, and the remaining 106 (33.87%) users are considered by Twitter to be fake accounts, created especially for spreading fake news.

Figure 4 - Users who posted on Donald Trump's Twitter profile

Text analyzer – most frequent phrases used by Donald Trump

Viewed from the perspective of the topics most commonly used in the Twitter discourse, we can see we can see that the term "fake news media" is the most frequently used (39 appearances), followed by the slogan used in the campaign - "Make America Great Again" (36 appearances), "the great state of" (30 appearances), "no collusion, no obstruction" (29 times), "i look forward to" (18 times), "I am pleased to" (18 times) or "the radical left democrats" (17 times). Also, Donald Trump often uses phrases such as "at the southern border" (16 times), "enemy of the people" (15 times), "my great honor" (14 times), "the great people of" (11 times).

No.	Top phrases containing 4 words (without punctuation marks)	Occurrences
1.	the fake news media	39
2.	in the history of	38
3.	make america great again	36
4.	of the united states	30
5.	the great state of	30
6.	no collusion no obstruction	29
7.	i look forward to	18
8.	i am pleased to	18
9.	the radical left democrats	17
10.	there was no collusion	16

11.	at the southern border	16
12.	enemy of the people	15
13.	the history of our	15
14.	was my great honor	14
15.	my great honor to	14
16.	it was my great	14
17.	anywhere in the world	13
18.	am pleased to announce	12
19.	bad for our country	12
20.	into the united states	12
21.	history of our country	12
22.	today it was my	11
23.	the history of the	11
24.	the great people of	11
25.	the new york times	11
26.	the enemy of the	11
27.	to the united states	11
28.	the united states and	10
29.	at the white house	10
30.	with kim jong un	10
31.	i will be interviewed	10
32.	pleased to announce that	10
33.	in the great state	10
34.	in the united states	10

Conclusions

Twitter has managed to give a strong voice to the politicians, who cannot be restrained by the censorship of traditional media institutions. Moreover, we can see that Twitter accounts have managed, at many times, to be stronger than traditional media channels. For example, Donald Trump has managed to exponentially increase the number of followers (62.3 million followers), in the context where, for example, Fox News manages to have a prime time audience of 2,446,000 total views¹. The 3,234 tweets posted by Donald

¹ <https://www.adweek.com/tvnewser/q1-2019-ratings-fox-news-continues-its-reign-as-cables-most-watched-network/398384/>

Trump between January 22 and August 16, 2019 generated a total of 218.4 million likes and 49.7 million retweets.

At the same time, we can see that, in the year 2019, the media discourse on Twitter has tempered more than the campaign / post-campaign period (2016/2017), but it uses enough of many expressions that used it in the election campaign which we can consider to be largely populist: ("the fake news media", "Make America Great Again", "the Southern border", "radical left democrats", "enemy of the people", "bad for our country", "no collusion," no obstruction" etc.).

Interestingly, when Donald Trump mention the term "Republican" on Twitter, the number of interactions increases as opposed to when he mentions "Democrats" (81.726 vs. 71.775 likes). At the same time, when building messages in which both parties are mentioned in the same post, we can also observe a high likes rate (76,920 likes). Another aspect that can direct communication in a favorable or less favorable direction is given by the very high percentage of fake users who publish information on Donald Trump's profile (38.87%).

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