

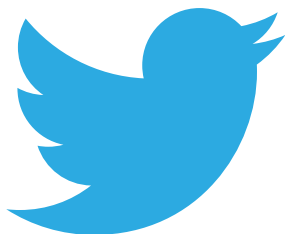
'Think...'

Special Edition

Barack Obama won the battle... on social media too!

On the 4th of April 2011, Barack Obama announced his candidacy for the 2012 US Presidential election on [Youtube](#)* Yesterday evening his first public reaction to his victory was made on Twitter, generating more than 535,000 retweets.

The candidate for the Democratic Party understood very early on the importance that social media would play during his second term campaign. JFK was the first 'Television' President. Last night Barack Obama may have become the first 'Social Media' President. TNS on behalf of CBS News and in collaboration with the Social Media Intelligence company, Vigiglobe, analysed a year of tweets exchanged about this election. Let's THINK about what happened in the last weeks of this fascinating political campaign.



* http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20050339-503544.html

When Size matters...

This election was a real challenge for the incumbent President. US electoral history, and the current economic context within the US, with the unemployment rate approaching 8%, were significant hurdles that Barack Obama managed to overcome.

For this new election, the Democratic candidate invested a lot of resources in both his grass-roots campaign and his online strategy. He managed to register more voters than 4 years ago, to knock on more doors, to make more phone calls, to send more emails, Facebook messages and tweets, and eventually, to talk to more people. The table below compares the resources deployed by Barack Obama compared to Mitt Romney's:

		Barack Obama	Mitt Romney
\$	Money spent (raised)	\$853m (\$934m)	\$750m (\$882m)
👤	Number of people on payroll	900	400
👤	Number of Campaign Staffer	292	208
🏠	Number of offices in the 10 swing States	622	238

Source: [Reuters http://news.yahoo.com/q-presidential-campaigns-invest-grass-roots-efforts-213113812.html](http://news.yahoo.com/q-presidential-campaigns-invest-grass-roots-efforts-213113812.html)

The significant differences in resources deployed (shown in the table above) had a significant impact for both candidates in terms of social media:

		Barack Obama	Mitt Romney
👍	Number of likes on official FB page	+32m	+12m
🐦	Number of followers on Twitter	+22m	+1.8m
🐦	Number of Twitter accounts followed by the candidate	670k	274
🐦	Number of Tweets written on the official account	7,929	1,350

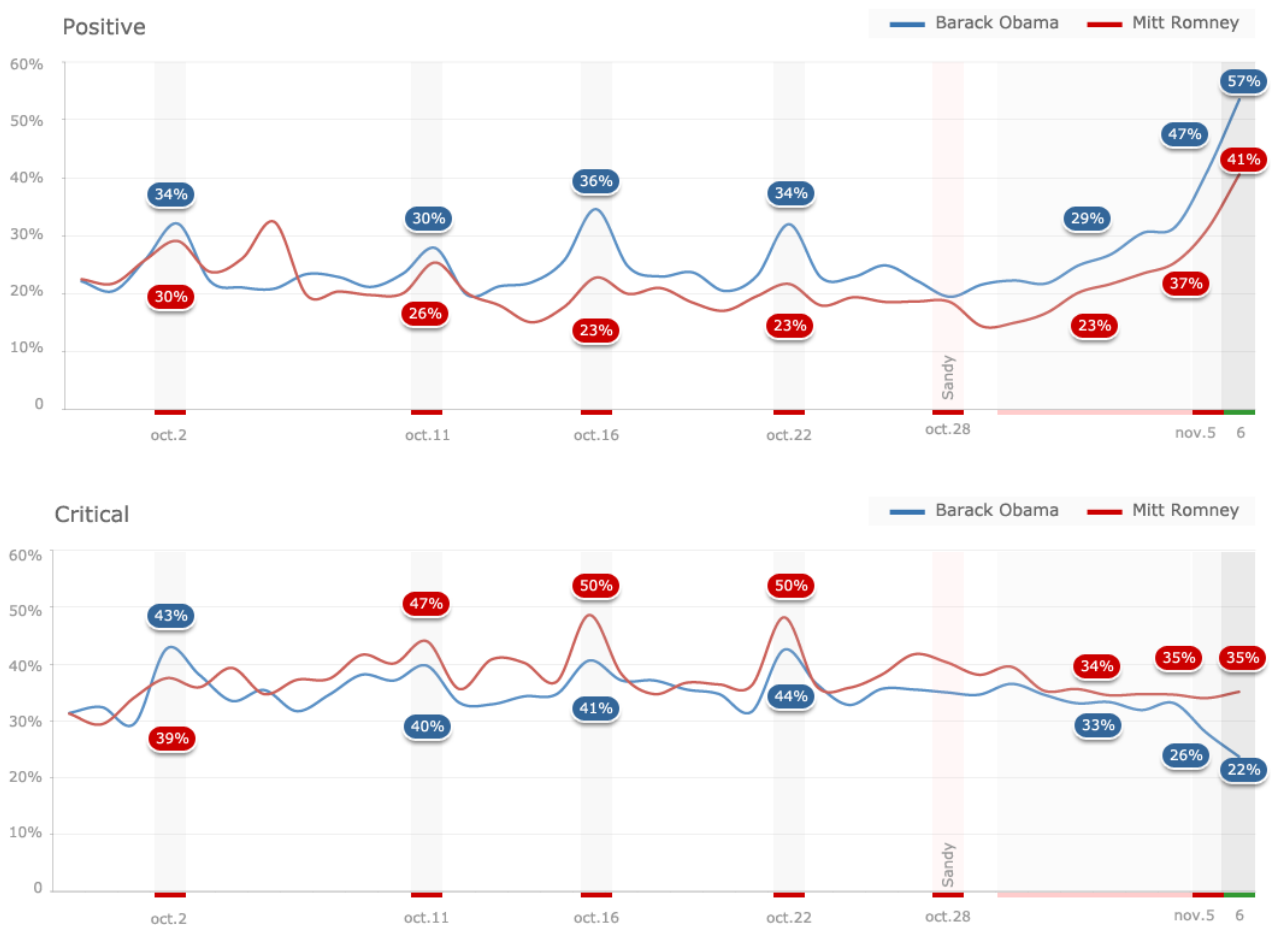
Obviously, the fact that Barack Obama was the incumbent helped him grow his presence on social media much earlier and more significantly than Romney. But this does not explain why the Republican candidate was only following 274 single accounts, when Obama's staff were listening to what 670,000 people had to say on Twitter... A big difference when it comes to demonstrating a certain degree of proximity with the US public.

All in all, these comparisons demonstrate that the link between potential voters and each candidate was significantly stronger on the Obama side. The incumbent President engaged much more on social media than the Republican candidate and this audience potentially had an important influence.

Presidential Debates: 3 to 1 for Obama

The TNS analysis of social media content shows that 'Twitterers' are quite often critical, if not cynical, when it comes to discussing politics. Twitter represents a kind of new Agora (gathering place) or forum, where they can freely debate, exchange and react.

October was probably one of the most important months in the campaign: three Presidential debates and one Vice-Presidential debate, were organised a few weeks before the election. Presented below is the evolution of our sentiment analysis for both candidates in the last month before the US election.



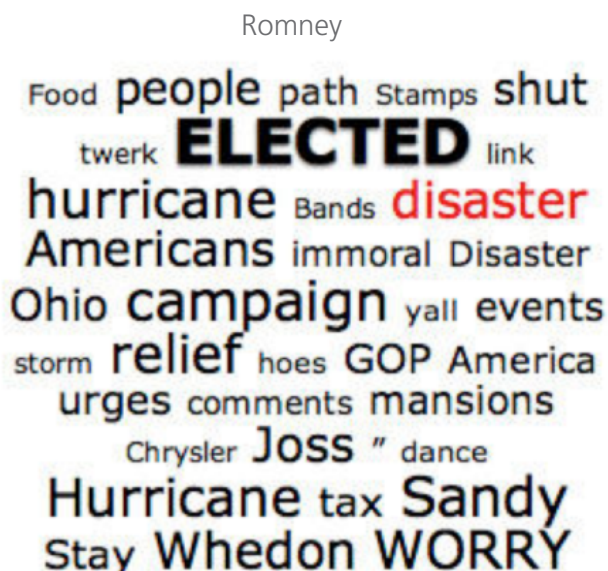
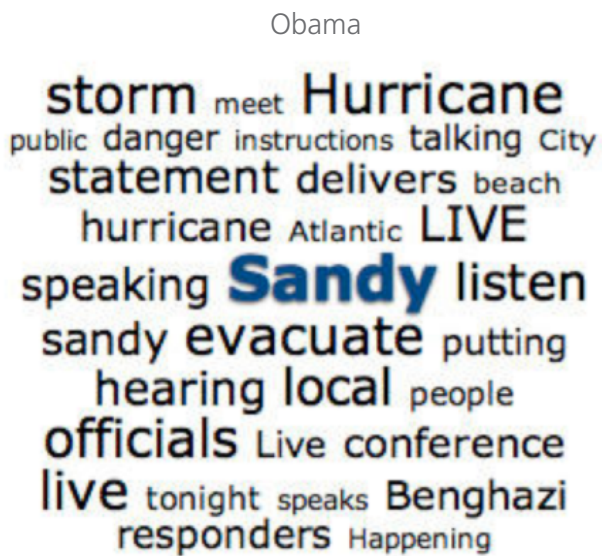
Our sentiment analysis shows that Obama had a difficult start with his 'not so good' performance during the first debate. On that day, we recorded 43% of negative tweets for him compared to 39% for Romney. As a matter of fact, this debate generated no less than 10.5m tweets in 90 minutes... This means that, on average, close to 2,000 tweets were exchanged every second. Who said people were not interested in politics?

The second debate was actually a Vice-Presidential debate between Joe Biden and Paul Ryan. The outcome of it had a better impact on Obama (40% of negative tweets) compared to Romney (47% of negative tweets). But, the real turning point of the campaign was after the third debate on the topic of Foreign and Domestic policy: Obama gained 6 points in terms of positivity (36%), whilst Romney lost 3 points in five days (23%) and generated 50% of negative tweets. The fourth debate confirmed this trend.

The #Sandy effect

In the last week before the US vote, many commentators rightly indicated that the race was “too close to call”. The vast majority of polls had both candidates at a very similar level of support with about 48% of the voting intentions each. Our Sentiment analysis based on Twitter content showed a similar pattern with a slight advantage to the incumbent President. On the 30th of October, Obama had 29% of positive tweets and 33% of negative ones (38%

could not be assigned to either sentiment). Romney had respectively 23% positive, 34% negative and 43% could not be assigned. This could well be an aftermath of the impact of the tropical storm which hit the Eastern Coast on the 28th of October. The word cloud generated on that day for both candidates seems to indicate that words related to 'Sandy' were more present for Obama than for Romney.



Word cloud on the 29th of October for Barack Obama (left) and Mitt Romney (right)

Support rises as the 'D' day was approaching

Although the situation in the polls was still quite uncertain, our analysis of the content of Tweets in the last 48 hours showed that Barack Obama has managed to get a significant level of engagement and support on Twitter. Like never before during his 18 months campaign.

Election Day analysis of Twitter only confirmed this trend showing a vast majority of positive tweets for Obama (51% before the announcement of his success, and 57% right after), while Romney increased his level of positivity by 4 additional points (41%).

Similarly, Romney recorded an increase of 14 points of positive tweets in only 6 days but was still behind Obama by 10 points.

Our Insights

- President Obama's communication strategy was based on two pillars, with equal focus: a massive offline campaign, in addition to a very professional online strategy. In today's world both these levers are equally important and political candidates need to pay attention to both to make a real difference in the end.
- Our analysis also shows the power of social media in the 'earned media' dimension. People tend to trust less and less the so called political elite or official communications. Social media, like Twitter and Facebook, represent fantastic tools to convince people to vote for a candidate and increase the impact of word-of-mouth. Social media plays a significant amplifying role.
- The campaign has also shown that the reputation of a candidate can be damaged within a few hours because of the impact of social media. Any organisation, personality or brand should therefore pay attention to this new phenomenon and monitor regularly what's being said about them on the Web 2.0 world.
- Crisis management strategies should also be prepared in order to counter such reputation issues. Our knowledge of public opinion will help you get there.

About TNS

TNS advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and stakeholder management, based on long-established expertise and market-leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world's consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world.

TNS is part of Kantar, one of the world's largest insight, information and consultancy groups.