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Twitter, Presidential Debates and Attention Economy: A Symbiosis between Television Audience and Social Media Users during Campaign Season

Abstract

The year 2017 was an intense electoral year in Chile, both parliamentary and presidential. In this context, by using computer intelligence, an interdisciplinary team conducted a collection and volumetric analysis of over 3 million Twitter messages belonging to users that mentioned, at least once, any of the presidential candidates, both in the first and second voting round. Our goal was focused on analyzing the relationship between traditional media (radio and television) and Twitter, probing user interactions during the broadcast of live political shows, with emphasis on presidential debates. For this purpose, we carried out a volumetric analysis of all mentions in social media during the broadcast of live political shows to characterize the digital attention of the audience, under different parameters. Our results show that there is high user interest in the digital debate regarding presidential debates, a positive correlation between traditional media and Twitter during the broadcast of live political shows, and that, also, the latter trigger social media; furthermore, we verify the double screen phenomenon made possible by mobile platforms.

Keywords

Electoral campaign, presidential debates, social media, digital attention, television and radio, double screen, users.

1. Introduction

One of the many consequences that the technological revolution has had on the media system, and especially on television, is that in recent years the audience's behavior has been modified, a behavior which the industry had characterized well until not so long ago based on assumptions and methodologies of the analog era (Castells, 2011; Campos, 2008). However, content consumption preferences, uses, and routines are not the same anymore and are strongly influenced by digital technology. Unlike what happened during most of the 20th century, today most people use not only one way, but several, to consume information (Aguado & Navarro, 2013). It has become increasingly difficult to anticipate when, from where, and what program the audiences will watch. Consequently, attracting the attention of the public is today a greater challenge, even more so if we consider the immense quantity of offers for the audience.

New, increasingly professional and technologically sophisticated routines of coexistence between television and social media (SM onwards) seem to be a part of the answer to these challenges, since today, to attract the interest of people, new strategies should consider focusing on the “digital attention” (Zhang *et al.*, 2017), which is an important variable in a context of information overabundance and continuous digital interaction.

A crucial moment in which both the political and media spheres are especially focused on achieving high levels of audience attention occurs in the electoral campaign season and during the broadcast of presidential debates (Cho, 2009; Kraus & Davis, 1981). As we will see below in our analysis, during the live broadcasts of these debates there seems to be a true symbiosis between SM and traditional media, with users at its center, users that follow the debate through different types of devices and digitally generate another debate on the digital sphere.

This supplementation between media and SM becomes increasingly important (Lahey, 2016; Wang, 2016) and is expressed, for example, through the active use of digital platforms by traditional media, which tend to have a high number of followers. Likewise, the most visited digital media tend to be, at least in the case of South America, precisely the same that have the greatest audiences in the analog context (Mastrini & Becerra, 2017). It is, for example, what occurs in Chile with *El Mercurio* network, whose sites emol.com or lun.cl are some of the most visited by Chileans. Likewise, CNN Chile has one of the country’s greatest communities on Twitter with nearly 3 million followers. Jenkins (2008), who anticipated that dominant media would employ digital technologies for the diffusion of their content and to maintain their market positions, had already noted this phenomenon.

In this context of digital convergence in which different actors, multiple platforms and diverse technologies interact, there are new ways to establish relations between media and the audience, SM and media, as well as new practices of content reception and generation (Hermida, 2014; Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013). This convergent interaction becomes even more apparent and intense in campaign seasons when the role of media and SM becomes crucial for the communication between the candidates and the public (Kreiss, 2016; Cotarelo, 2013).

In this context, our research was guided by the following research question: which relations and interactions occur between traditional media, Twitter, and the audience during the broadcast of live political shows, in campaign season? With this question, and in the context of the first and second round of the presidential election, we carried out a volumetric analysis of Chilean users’ behavior during the broadcast of the live political shows to characterize their digital attention under different parameters.

The analysis was focused on the presidential debates. It is a moment in the electoral contest for which the presidential candidates and their supporters prepare intensely and professionally. It is also a moment in which media such as television and radio retake their role of privileged mediation between citizens and politicians, therefore, a relevant event of political communication (Gerstlé, 2005).

In 2017, two presidential elections were carried out in Chile: the first presidential voting round (November 17; 8 candidates) and the second voting round (December 19; two candidates). It was, because of this, an intense year in political–electoral terms, an intensity that also manifested in the communicational sphere. Network television channels organized two presidential debates, one for the first voting round and another for the second voting round (November 6 and December 11, respectively), which were broadcasted by all the TV channels. Both debates achieved high rates of viewership (CNTV, 2018) and were commented massively by users of SM, especially through Twitter, as our data shows. Moreover, Chilean radios organized two presidential debates during the campaign months (October 20 and December 7). Along with the debates, the candidates were invited to different political television shows that were always broadcasted live.

In the context of our general objective, we proceeded to analyze the activity of all Twitter users that mentioned, at least once, the presidential candidates. For this, we volumetrically described their behavior before, during, and after the shows; we also probed their digital attention by analyzing the source and type of platform used by them, guided by the interest in exploring the double or multiple screen activities during the broadcast of the political shows. Likewise, we probed the correlation between social media and traditional media in the aforementioned electoral context.

1.1. *Political Communication and Campaigns in the 21st Century*

The irruption of digital platforms and their massive use by people worldwide have altered many dynamics, both in the communicational and political sphere. For this reason, a major part of the assumptions, categories, and hypotheses of the 20th century, are being reviewed, both by the academy, media industry, as well as the political sphere (Gans, 2010; Graber & Smith, 2005; Schwab & Nicholas, 2018).

The artificial intelligence that occupies a core role in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016) today allows us to analyze immense volumes of data (Russell, Norvig & Davis, 2016; Provost & Fawcett, 2013), in a world where the use of digital technology is increasingly extensive and intensive. More and more people spend more time in front of their digital devices to carry out the most diverse activities, one of them is commenting on television shows, especially live shows, thus generating new phenomena such as the structural integration (or symbiosis) between television shows and SM, called multi-screen, the use of mobile platforms for media consumption of the audience, etc. (Wang, 2016; Harrington *et al.*, 2013; Lahey, 2016; Feijóo *et al.*, 2009).

In this sense, digital technology has triggered an intense and accelerated change dynamic for traditional media. The appearance of the Web 2.0, for example, entailed a loss of their privileged status for they are no longer, as they were during the whole 20th century, the main source of information for people. Media stopped being the main communication channels and central nodes for information transmission. The traditional scheme that granted them unidirectional power over the creation and circulation of discourse has been significantly altered in recent years (Castells, 2015). This loss of their central position to set the agenda (Meraz, 2011), leads to a new context, with consequences on political communication and, specifically, on how electoral campaigns are organized (Rodotá, 2000). In this sense, a growing transition of political activity towards digital platforms is observed, especially during campaigns (Issenberg, 2012). In electoral season, the use of SM has become increasingly important for users, political parties, and candidates, who must adapt their campaign designs to the instant and direct communication between voters, candidates, and media that facilitates the networks (Kreiss, 2014; Jungherr, 2014; Lobos 2017; Rogers, 2004).

The next step appeared with the use of computer intelligence and Big Data applied to SM in the political sphere and electoral campaigns. One of the first in making high-impact, strategic and specialized use of digital tools (with special emphasis on Twitter) and Big Data in an electoral campaign was Barack Obama in 2008 (Kreiss, 2014; García, 2017). Since then, important universities and research centers started exploring how SM relate to voters and how they affect the public debate, especially on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Deltell, 2012). In the 2016 elections, the technological sophistication increased to such a level that this time the surprise was Trump's team. During the third presidential debate held against Clinton, he could take one of the arguments raised on television and create, by using algorithms, 175 thousand different versions of said message, which were sent massively, and at the same time, hypersegmentedly, with variations and details according to the profile of each user (Hilbert, 2017). If the tools that played a core role in the political communication of the campaigns were Twitter in 2008 and Facebook in 2016, in 2018 it was the instant messaging

service WhatsApp that caused surprise in the Brazilian presidential election, because of its use by Bolsonaro supporters (Dunbar, 2019).

Due to this massive, daily and unstoppable use of technology, the study of SM in their interaction with media and the political sphere offers the possibility of researching the web as a device that allows us to explore the digital attention of the audiences, their interactions and political opinions (Ceron *et al.*, 2014). Such a quantity of data and information on user likes, preferences, attitudes, etc., is generated in these networks (Livingstone, 2018) that different analytical approaches are being constantly developed for this valuable source of data. In this regard, our research was aimed at volumetrically analyzing the activity of Twitter users during political shows broadcasted live, with emphasis on presidential debates, to detect correlations between this SM and traditional media.

1.1.1. Television Debates during Presidential Campaigns

Not only media but also electoral campaigns have had to adapt to the new landscapes of communication. In this sense, it is interesting to explore this adaptation with one of the most globally recognized electoral formats, such as live presidential debates, whose realization shows a significant increase from the sixties in many countries (Plasser & Plasser, 2002).

Debates are decisive moments of the campaigns and explained as “symptom and cause” of the importance acquired by political communication (Gauthier, 1998, p. 394). Therefore, debates are considered necessary for the presidential confrontation (Mato, 1994) and are characterized as a special journalistic genre. Some authors consider that the winners of the debate are often the winners of the election (Castells, 2011, p. 234; Hanson & Benoit, 2010). In this sense, television debates, for example, are considered in the era of mass communication as the most effective and spectacular event in a presidential campaign. This communicational importance seems to be upheld until today, among others, by the possibility of digitally sharing and amplifying the media event through web sites and SM (Benoit *et al.*, 2016).

Due to this central position of debates in a campaign, the possible political effects of debates on the public have been inquired, in terms of the perceptions regarding the winners of the debates (Díez Nicolás & Semetko, 1995; Lledó Callejón, 2001; Marín, 2003; Shaw, 1999; Yawn & Betty, 2002;), the type of political knowledge acquired regarding the debated issues (Maurer & Reinemann, 2006; Racine Group, 2002), or if they are more or less determinant according to the country in which they are broadcasted (Clark, 2000; Jamieson & Adasiewicz, 2000; Lawson, 2003). More recently, investigations in different parts of the world, for example, the one carried out by the Mediaflows group from Spain, explore the correlations between the presidential debates and their repercussion on Twitter (López & Ordaz, 2017).

Undoubtedly, debates offer the possibility of creating closer knowledge of the candidates; also, the audience reach tends to be greater compared to other political events or expressions of their campaigns, since the broadcast reaches segments that do not necessarily consume political information regularly as hesitant voters do; likewise, their broadcast promotes citizen discussion to a greater extent than other campaign events (Luengo, 2011, p. 82). Presidential debates, especially the television ones, generate expectations, among other things, because they are thought to be an instance where unexpected situations can occur, less controlled than the rest of the campaign actions (Echeverría & Chong, 2013), as well as conflicts among candidates, even triggering accusations or political scandals that stimulate active responses in audiences (Chihu, 2009).

1.2. Attention Economy, Twitter, and Social Television

In the context of what has been described so far, one of the challenges that media face today in the relation with their audience is the overabundance of information, due to digital technologies (Halford *et al.*, 2017; Venturini *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). In this sense, capturing the attention of the audience is a major challenge today. This is why the digital

context should be considered to know their likes and preferences. In the specific case of the television industry, for example, it has had to supplement its classic quantitative (audience) and qualitative (focus group) tools of inquiry with the use of Big Data to better understand its audience and face the challenge of capturing their attention in this new landscape (Lahey, 2016; Gallego, 2013). One way to obtain this information is by knowing how people use SM. This explains the high interest that the television industry places on data mining of the digital platforms to obtain user data and, based on that, to develop “audience engagement” strategies.

If to this challenge with the audience we add the representation crisis that Western democracies are suffering worldwide, the discredit of political parties and the growing depoliticization of citizens (Bobbio, Pontara & Veca, 1985; Castells, 2011; Sartori, 2007), we could assume that television shows, such as political debates, might muster little interest in the public.

But despite the discredit of politics and the migration of audiences towards digital media, these programs continue to attract the attention of citizens, who actively comment and discuss around candidates, generating in the digital context a parallel debate related to and triggered by the live television debate (Benoit & Sheaffer, 2006; McKinney & Carlin, 2004; Ruiz & Bustos, 2017).

This “double debate” occurs in a context of “double screen,” in which the audiences of traditional media, such as radio and television, are also digital platform users, and from them, they interact with other people while the consumption of media content occurs (Claes & Deltell, 2015; Gallego, 2013; Harrington *et al.*, 2013; Wang, 2016). Thus, the experience of consuming television can become a social practice in which viewers not only interact with their families or close friends, namely, with whom they share their immediate environment and whom they know, but also they virtually exchange ideas with strangers –supporters and opponents–, candidates, and their teams, in addition to journalists and producers in charge of the television space, etc. Thus, social media –Twitter in our case– become a modern public space and a thermometer that minute by minute delivers information and metrics regarding the reactions, interactions, and opinions of viewers (Harrington *et al.*, 2013; Lahey, 2016).

This phenomenon, known as Social TV, is defined as the evolution of the traditional television consumption towards community consumption, which enables the interaction of the viewer with the content (Gallego, 2013; Lahey, 2016; Proulx & Shepatin, 2012). This occurs through auxiliary devices, such as mobile phones, laptops, and –to a lesser extent– tablets. In this sense, and as we will see below, our data shows that cell phones are the quintessential second screen used by viewers at the time of sharing their opinions regarding the presidential debate on the screen.

In this context, channels look for ways of promoting these debates and capturing people’s attention before and after they occur, in order to attract media audience as well as a digital attention. For this purpose, they use hashtags, interactive questions, online voting, and post user live messages, etc. Thus, this generates what we may call “normalized structural integration” (Wang, 2016) between SM and television shows. Many authors argue the creation of a symbiosis that works particularly well if the format is live, since it increases the sense community around a subject and show, variables which are key for structuring Social TV (Claes & Deltell, 2015; González-Neira & Quintas, 2014; Harrington *et al.*, 2013).

Particularly, Twitter has become the social network that best pairs with television (Claes & Deltell, 2015; Gallego, 2013; Harrington *et al.*, 2013; Ruiz & Bustos, 2017; Wang, 2016). This occurs because of its characteristics –short messages, possibility of instant reply to other users, real-time posts, trending topics, etc.– that facilitate its integration with live shows and, at the same time, transform it in a meeting point for audiences, and in a data mine for industries that wish to know how viewers are moving in this digital landscape.

2. Methodology

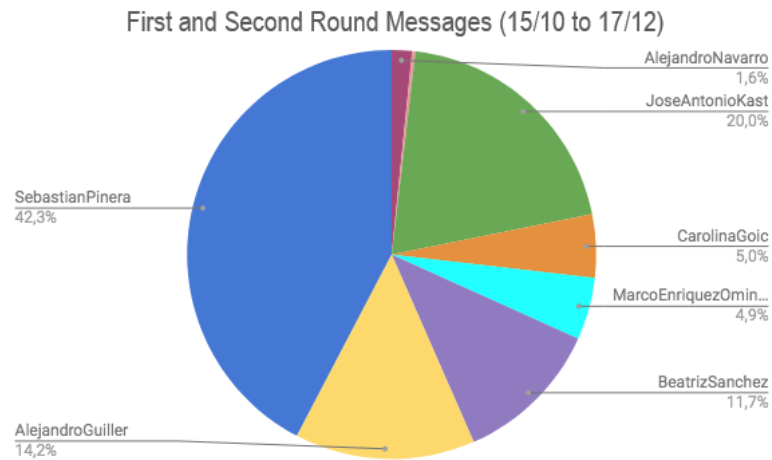
This research is part of a greater project called Electronic Demoscopy of the Public Space (Deep, Demoscopia Electrónica del Espacio Público) by Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, which since 2016 assembled an interdisciplinary group of researchers –linguists, engineers and communication specialists– interested in analyzing the public debate in the web, in different contexts. In 2017 we focused on collecting data related to the Chilean presidential elections in Twitter, to subject them to different types of classifications and analysis.

In terms of sample design, we defined all users of Twitter that mentioned of the presidential candidates as our object of interest. For the capture and extraction of these tweets, we worked with a renowned Chilean social media monitoring company. This enabled us to develop a database with the messages of all Chilean users that mentioned any of the running candidates at least once during 2017. This meant collecting 9,367,127 mentions (including tweets and retweets). These messages were stored in databases owned by the company, and the research team retrieved them through a collection algorithm to generate a backup of the messages and metadata in our servers. This whole database has been processed for different research purposes and types of analysis, such as volumetric, of sentiment, as well as “network analysis” (see Santander *et al.*, 2017; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2018).

For the specific case of this article, our analysis was volumetric and focused in the campaign months of the first and second voting round that took place from mid-October to mid-December. Due to its volumetric nature, it is interesting to monitor the behavior of the candidate mention curves, in regards to frequency, time and day, to analyze the correlation between Twitter and debates (relation between television debates, broadcasting hours, volume of tweets, candidate mentions curve, message source, etc.), and to explore user interaction (tweets and retweets). According to the quantitative nature of our study, some decisions were made for the generation of indicators. In this respect, we characterized the following data: general volume of mentions (includes tweets and retweets), specific volume per candidate, unique message volume, volume of tweets per minute, frequency by day and hour, and source of the tweets.

For this purpose, during the campaign period (October 13 to December 17), we collected all the comments (original messages and retweets) that mentioned, at least once, the candidates for the first and second voting round. There were 4,278,935 mentions in total during this period, corresponding to 372,665 accounts; this sample was subjected to a volumetric analysis from different angles, with special focus on the days of radio and television presidential debates. The mentions distribution during the collection period was distributed in the following way: 43.4% of the messages referred to the winning candidate of the first and second voting round, the current President of the Republic, Sebastián Piñera (Figure 1); the remainder 56.6% was distributed among the other candidates.

Figure 1: Total of Twitter mentions of the presidential candidates from October 15 to December 17.

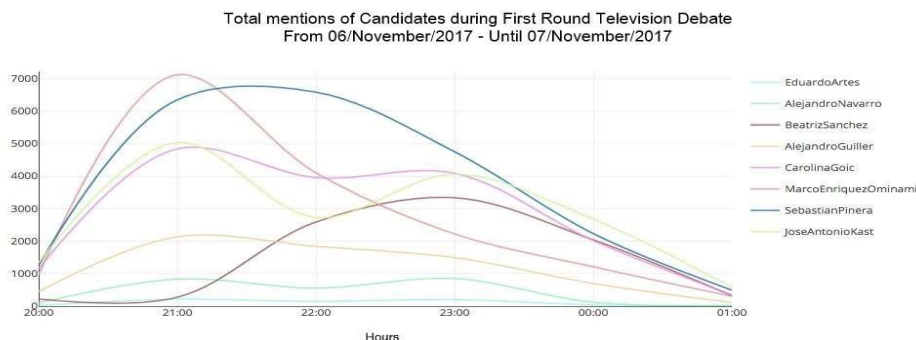


Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of the presidential debates, the first one was a radio debate and took place on October 20 from 8 am to 10 am. Regarding the televised debates, the first of them, just like the radio debate, gathered the 8 candidates that ran for the presidency in the first voting round. It was broadcasted on November 6 by all the Chilean television channels, it started at 22.00 and ended at 00:58 on November 7. Despite the quantity of candidates competing on the first voting round, we decided to collect the mentions that referred to all of them and not only the ones that the polls indicated as the most competitive, since we wanted to observe user behavior in the digital context without biases, within the setting of a pluralist debate broadcasted by all Chilean television channels. The second radio debate took place at the same time that the one on December 7, and the second television debate took place on December 11, its broadcast started at 22.00 and ended at 00:31 on December 12. In these debates, the two candidates with the most votes on the first voting round participated: Sebastián Piñera (current President of the Republic) and Alejandro Guillier.

As we will see, user activity related to the debates always started before them and extended after them. The curves of the mentions of the candidates started to spike two hours before and up to one hour after the debates (Figure 2); this is, there is a parallel debate in social media with its own temporality, which we have called digital pre-debate and post-debate. For example, although the first televised debate started at 22.00 and ended at 00:58, the significant Twitter user activity related to this debate started two hours before and ended an hour after.

Figure 2: Mentions curve on Twitter per candidate during the first televised presidential debate.



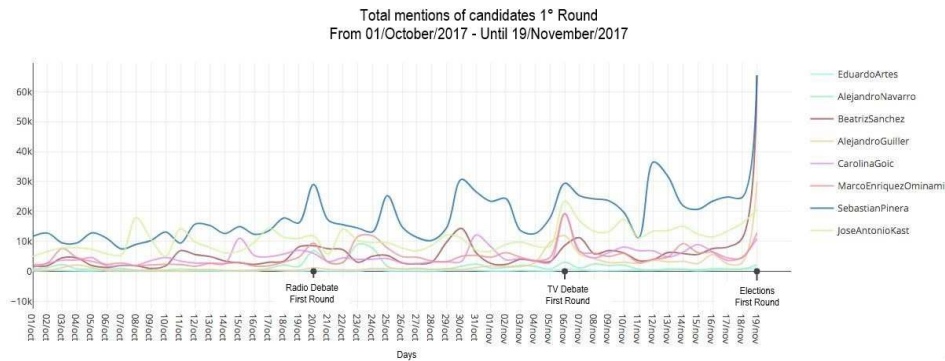
Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the use of bots that is often reported in electoral campaigns around the world and that can invalidate the findings, since they are a way of altering social media activity to influence the vote, our analysis took this variable into account and we took methodological precautions in this regard (Castillo *et al.*, 2019). Technically, a bot is a piece of software that automatically generates both content and interactions through the automated use of algorithms. Since the quantity of data collected (4,278,935 mentions) makes it impossible to humanly verify the existence of bots, to evaluate their presence on SM during the Chilean presidential campaign, we used automatic learning techniques that searched for patterns in collected data and allowed us to determine the existence of bots. For each one of the 372,665 users, we developed a characteristics extraction process that was grouped in 6 categories: (1) user characteristics, such as number of followers, number of tweets, etc., (2) characteristics of the interaction of users with their followers: number of retweets and mentions, (3) characteristics of a user's interaction network based on retweets, mentions, and hashtags, (4) temporal characteristics of a user's activity such as time between retweets, consecutive retweets and mentions, (5) characteristics of the content of the tweets, such as frequency and proportion of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc., and (6) tweet content sentiment. In this context, and according to the conceptual guidelines generated by our team, four supervised automatic learning algorithms (Random Forest, AdaBoost, Decision Tree and Support Vector Machines) were trained to detect bots during the campaign months. Our experimental results allow us to rule out the presence of bots in the Chilean presidential elections.

3. Analysis: Live Political Shows, Twitter and Multi-Screens, a Symbiosis that works

The analysis of our data allows us to observe diverse correlational aspects between television and Twitter that arose during the campaign. One of them refers to the relation between the broadcasting of presidential debates and the significant increase in Twitter interactions. Indeed, in both opportunities that candidates appeared on television debating, monthly peaks of activity in the social network occurred (Figures 3 and 4). If we observe the curve of total mentions on Twitter one month before the first round of elections (from October 17 to November 19), we will see that on November 6, day of the first televised debate, there was a peak of mentions of all the candidates (Figure 3). That day, a total of 115,663 messages related to those candidates were generated, of these, 77,532 occurred during the time of the debate, this is, 67% of the day's total.

Figure 3: Total of messages referred to the first voting round candidates from October 18 to November 19.

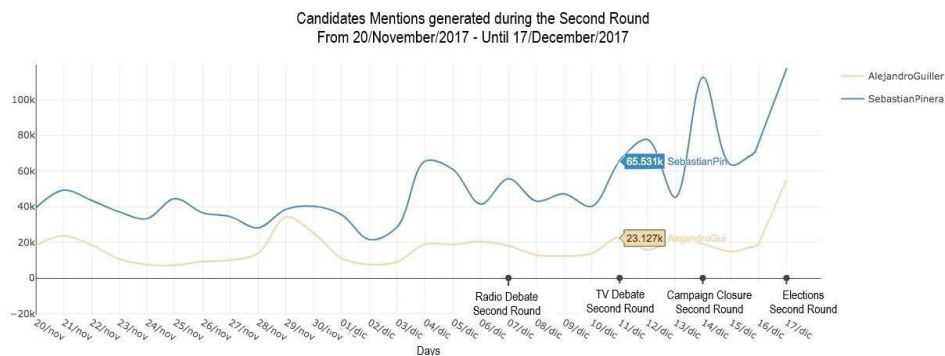


Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, in strictly volumetric terms, the day of the debate benefits all the candidates since the mentions of all of them increased in the web. In this sense, who benefited the most, according to our data, was the current President of the Republic, Sebastián Piñera. He was the most mentioned candidate during the first debate, both during the day and during the debate. That day he received a total of 29,440 mentions, of them, 20,440 (69.4%) were produced during the time-lapse of the debate (from 20:00 hrs to 1:00 hrs); this is, almost 70% of his mentions during the day were triggered by the debate. In turn, these 20,440 mentions equal to 26.4% of all mentions of candidates during the broadcast, being the most mentioned during the debate.

In December, during the second voting round campaign, the correlation between media, debates, candidates, and Twitter is similar to the one in November. Also, at the time of the second televised debate (December 11), one of the most important peaks in the month occurred. That day, 88,658 messages mentioned the candidates, of these, 65,523, namely 74%, were generated during the broadcast of the debate. And just like it occurred in November, most of these comments mentioned the winning candidate; of 65,523 mentions, 75.2% (49,248) mentioned this candidate during the debate.

Figure 4: Total of messages referred to the second voting round candidates from November 20 to December 17.



Source: Own elaboration.

On the days of televised presidential debate there was a huge volume of interactions in Twitter related to the candidates. On November 6, more than 115 thousand mentions were generated. The only day on which there was a greater volumetric activity on the social network referred to the eight candidates was the voting day (November 19). In other words –with the above-mentioned exception–, the day of the debate was the most active on Twitter during November, also, the greater volume of interactions on that day occurred during the debate broadcast, concentrating 67% of the total mentions.

We see similar behavior in the second voting round campaign period. The day of the debate is one of the days with the most activity in the social network: 88,658 mentions referred to both candidates during the day, of these, 65,523 (74%) occurred at the time of the debate. In December, there were only two days in which there was greater digital activity than on the day of the debate: December 14, day of campaign closure for both candidates, and December 17, day of the presidential election.

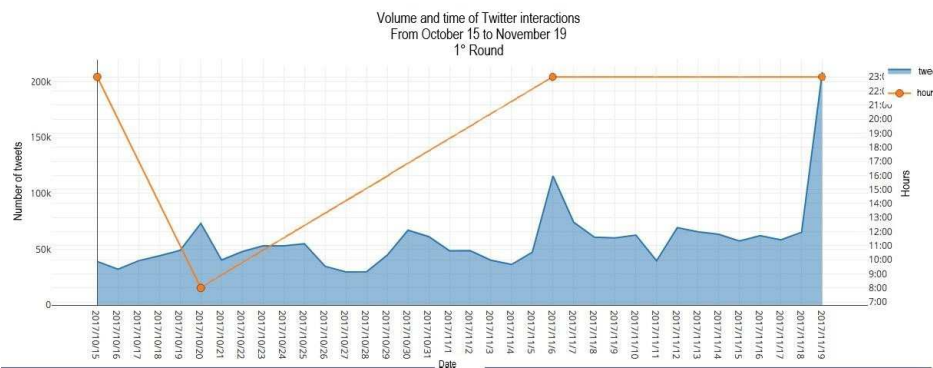
3.1. *Live Political Shows and Peaks on Twitter*

As we saw in the two election months, peaks on Twitter are correlated positively to the presidential debates on television and radio, but, according to data, during the campaign period, that relation is also verified with the other live political programs that were broadcasted, even though the format changes. This positive and dependency correlation is maintained throughout the campaign period. The live presence of the candidates in media generates a triggering effect on the social network: if political programme activate, so does the web. In that regard, let us observe Figure 5. The orange points indicate the day and time of Twitter peaks, according to the volume of mentions of the candidates (in blue). In the time range from October 15 to November 6, all Twitter peaks occurred on the day and time in which politics programmes were broadcasted on television, in which some presidential candidates participated live. Not only presidential debates but also interview television shows with individual candidates triggered massive reactions on Twitter. The live presence of the candidates in media always caused intense social media user activity during the campaign (and also high audience rates measured in television ratings, according to the report by the National Television Council [CNTV, Consejo Nacional de Televisión] in 2018). For example, on Sunday, October 15, the Twitter peak (Figure 5) occurred at 23:00, during the interview with the presidential candidate of the Democracia Cristiana party, Carolina Goic, in the most important Chilean political television programme, “Tolerancia Cero.” This show broadcasted every Sunday at nighttime (from 22:30 to 00:30) generated activity peaks on Twitter. We can also see another peak on Sunday, October 29, caused by the presence on of the left-wing candidate, Beatriz Sánchez.

And not only politics programme on prime-time triggered peaks on the social network. If we observe the indicators from October 20, we see that the highest point occurs at an unusual time, 8 in the morning. On that day, the Chilean Radio Broadcasters Association (ARCHI, Asociación de Radiodifusores de Chile) organized a live presidential radio debate with the eight candidates, and 73,174 mentions regarding the candidates were generated on that day. It is interesting to note that, just like it happened with television debates, in this occasion there was also a pre-debate and post-debate in the web because even though the radio debate started at 8 am and ended minutes after 10 am, Twitter was already activated at 6 am and continued to actively discuss around the candidates until 11 am. Another verified behavior, just as it occurred in the television debates, is that in volumetric terms the most voted candidate, Sebastián Piñera, is also the most mentioned during the radio debate.

As we see, there is always a positive correlation between the live broadcast of a political show and activity volume on Twitter. In the campaign period, the users, whether during the day or night, massively comment on the candidates during their media presence.

Figure 5: Mentions volume and peaks on Twitter, according to day and hour, first voting round.



Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. Debates Activate and Multiple Screens Are Turned On

The social network “activates” two hours before the debate, meaning, the digital activity begins before the show, both at daytime and nighttime. In this sense, we can discuss a pre-debate in the networks that shows us that a few hours before it began, the average of tweets per minute that mentioned one of the candidates increased exponentially. And as we approach the end of the debate, the activity in the social network also decreased significantly. This occurred both on the first voting round with eight candidates as well as in the second voting round with two candidates.

In this behavior, mobile platforms, especially cellphones, play a key role. In the context of the double screen phenomenon, we can see that most users interact with the debate using their cellphones. The attention that people pay to the debate is mediated by the use of mobile devices, especially cellphones, and its use generates a parallel debate on social media that is related to the television debate, both before and after the event, most mentions on Twitter regarding the December debate were produced in this manner. Among the 65,523 mentions during the debate, 81% of them were made through cellphones in the case of Sebastián Piñera (51.1% Twitter for Android and 29.1% Twitter for iPhone); and in the case of Alejandro Guillier, 79.7% (50.5% Twitter for Android and 29.2% Twitter for iPhone).

4. Conclusions

Research data shows that political live shows during electoral campaign season attract significant digital attention, both in prime time and daytime, and both in television and radio. In an electoral context, these shows, far from becoming old-fashioned because of their formats or the more traditional platforms in which they are broadcasted, acquire relevance as one of the fundamental media activities for the campaigns. Only on the very day of the election, there was greater digital activity related to the candidates, in both months.

As it was ascertained in the analysis of our data, debates are well supplemented by Twitter, generating a pre-debate and post-debate that amplifies the candidates’ presence from television and radio towards the digital context, where massive interactions occur that tend to be the greatest during the electoral period.

This symbiosis between social networks and live shows strengthens user interactions in the context of the double screen effect that enables, especially due to the use of cellphones, an intense digital activity, with debates becoming a campaign “momentum” for the audiences, this is a moment in which the digital activity impetus of the users significantly increases in quantity and speed. Cell phones, in this sense, are the main devices that enable citizen interaction with the debate. Our country shows 91.9 mobile connections per 100 inhabitants,

and 95% of people access the internet from a mobile device, which shows the potential of this technology for political participation.

In this sense, presidential debates currently act as an instance that does not limit itself to the analog space in which it is broadcasted, nor does it limit itself to communicate only candidate opinions. On the contrary, due to the possibilities that the Web 2.0 offers, the debate extends to and continues on the networks, where, additionally, the audience's opinions and comments are expressed, giving life to a new parallel debate that instantaneously interprets and remakes the topics that stimulate political discussion in its way.

Another notorious aspect is that the candidate that always generated the greatest mention activity on Twitter is also who won in the ballot box, both in the first and second voting round, the current president, Sebastián Piñera. This relation between quantity of mentions and votes for the winning candidate that our data shows in strictly volumetric terms could be further analyzed with other analytical procedures, such as sentiment analysis, in search for possible correlations which test the predictive potential that research like this can have for analyzing the use of social networks in presidential campaign season.

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