Inside the Numbers Racket:
The 2018 Midterm Election Campaigns on Twitter

A PEORIA Project Inquiry
Dr. Michael Cornfield
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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. (Social Media Monitoring Metrics) Are There Reliable Predictive Indicators of Election Results to be discerned from Twitter?

2. (Usage Cases) What Twitter Strategies, Messages, and Techniques Worked and What Didn’t?
METHODOLOGY

• Comparative Analysis of Engagement Traffic on 126 Twitter Accounts of Candidates for Governor, House, and Senate in 63 close races.
• General Election Campaign Time Period: September 1 – October 31, 2018.
• Exploratory Metrics:
  1) Growth Rate in Account Followers.
  3) (end point) Engagement/Follower Ratios.
LARGEST FOLLOWS GROWTH RATE DISPARITIES (winners underlined)

1. FL GOV: Ron DeSantis 389% - Andrew Gillum 23% 356
2. IA 03: Cindy Axne 337% - Rep. David Young 5% 332
3. MS SEN: Mike Espy 279% - Sen. Cindy Hyde Smith 19% 260
4. NC 09: Marc Harris 191% - Dan McCready 17% 174
5. NJ 03: Tom MacArthur 133% - Andy Kim 14% 119
6. FL 15: Kristen Carlson 107% - Ross Spano 4% 103
7. MN 01: Jim Hagedorn 130% - Daniel Feehan 37% 97
8. NV SEN: Jacky Rosen 75% - Dean Heller 12% 63
POP QUIZ

One candidate among the 126 examined actually lost Twitter followers:
September 1, 2018: 4,622
October 31, 2018: 4,591

I bet you can guess who it was....
Yes, Steve King (R-IA)!

He was one of four incumbent candidates who basically did not use a campaign Twitter Account in September and October....and the only one *so far* who won re-election.

The others: Karen Handel (GA 06), Steve Knight (CA 25), and Rob Woodall (GA 07).
LARGEST SHARE OF VOICE (total engagement) DISPARITIES


OK, but what about candidates who used Twitter and got poor reception/weak echoes?
LARGEST SHARE OF VOICE (total engagement) DISPARITIES

2. NY 27: Nate McMurray – Rep. Chris Collins 92 (96% - 4%)
3. OK 05: Kendra Horn – Rep. Steve Russell 86 (93% - 7%)
4. IL 14: Lauren Underwood – Rep. Randy Hultgren 82 (91% - 9%)
5. TX 23: Gina Ortiz Jones – Rep. Will Hurd 80 (90% - 10%)
6. TX 32: Colin Allred – Rep. Pete Sessions 76 (88% - 12%)
7. MI 08: Elissa Slotkin – Rep. Mike Bishop 74 (87% - 13%)
8. NC 13: Kathy Manning – Rep. Ted Budd 70 (85% - 15%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Engagement Ratio</th>
<th>Opponent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MN 01</td>
<td>Jim Hagedorn</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>Daniel Feehan 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GA GOV</td>
<td>Brian Kemp</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>Stacey Abrams 4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AZ SEN</td>
<td>Martha McSally</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>Kyrsten Sinema 6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MT SEN</td>
<td>Matt Rosendale</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>Sen. Jon Tester 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IN SEN</td>
<td>Mike Braun</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>Sen. Joe Donnelly 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>TN SEN</td>
<td>Phil Bredesen</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>Marsha Blackburn 9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NV SEN</td>
<td>Jacky Rosen</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>Sen. Dean Heller 5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>TX SEN</td>
<td>Beto O’Rourke</td>
<td>11.8 (5M!)</td>
<td>Sen. Ted Cruz 1.2 (4M!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Preliminary Findings

There does seem to be a connection between dense Twitter engagement and winning. But there are many other variables to consider. Next steps for our research:

• Interviews with digital strategists on selected campaign cases.

• Model-building with these & other Twitter metrics, (small donor) funds raised.

• Comparative keyword analysis (what did the tweets actually say?).
Thank you for your feedback and support!

Michael

corn@gwu.edu