

Chapter 11

The Use of Twitter During the 2013 Protests in Brazil: Mainstream Media at Stake

Nina Fernandes dos Santos
Université Panthéon-Assas, France

ABSTRACT

2013 was an important year for the Brazilian political life, as citizens took to the streets against the increase of public transport fare. The demonstrations revealed a widespread dissatisfaction with the Brazilian political system and the traditional media did not escape the criticisms. This chapter focuses on how discourses about mainstream media were articulated on Twitter during Brazilian protests. Our corpus has 6,580 tweets that directly mention 12 Brazilian mainstream media. The goal was to understand how these discourses were translated into the practice of using Twitter in this specific context which mixes the possibility of participation and expression in a digital and social environment and the context of protest. Results show that at the same time that the major media continue to be important elements guiding the political discussion in social networks, the speeches towards them are extremely critical. Although Globo is the main target, the tone is almost homogeneous between different media, which shows a general mistrust towards the communication system.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0377-5.ch011

INTRODUCTION

To argue that Brazilian politics was turned upside down after the wave of protests in 2013 is not an exaggeration. The movement, characterized, among other things, by the intensive use of social media, has become the subject of analysis by a large number of researchers in the fields of communication and politics (Bringel & Domingues, 2013; Judesnaider et al., 2013; Locatelli, 2013; Gomes, 2016; Medeiros, 2016; Alonso and Mische, 2017; Antonio and Magalhães, 2017; Mendonça and Bustamante, 2018; Mendonça, 2018). The more general relationship between protest movements and the use of social media also has already been developed in several studies that discuss the issue from various angles, including new patterns of collective action, more horizontal decision-making processes, movement impacts in institutional politics and the ideological diversity present in the streets and networks.

Our interest, although also situated in this crossroad between the use of social media - and more specifically Twitter - and protest movements, is directed in another direction, that of trying to understand what are the relations between social media and the existing communication system. It is not about imagining a substitution of the mass communication system - which continues to exist and complexifies its actions - but of discussing how social media is not only a new communication actor in itself but also how its emergence displaces the other actors already present in this system.

It is also important to clarify some basic notions of this work. Regarding the term social media, we adopt the concept proposed by Boyd and Ellison (2007) that define them as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. We do not see social media as completely opposed or aligned to alternative or mainstream media¹. We rather consider that the conversation on social media will have the participation of both of them, along with a plurality of individual and collective voices.

What we propose in this paper is a discussion about how mainstream media is pictured and mentioned on Twitter during the 2013 protests. Although the criticism to these media in Brazil is not a novelty brought by the recent movement, our perception is that the broad use of social media constitutes not only a new space of expression but also a new arena of dispute on narratives about the communication system.

The discussion we propose in this article is part of a broader research. It is based on a corpus of 23 interviews with activists, journalists, and communication advisors that, in some way, participated in the 2013 protests in Brazil. These interviews will not be presented here for reasons of space, but we will use one of the main discourses we identified through them to build the analysis of our corpus: a set of 6,256 tweets collected via the hashtag #vempruarua between the 1st July and September 31, 2013, citing at least one of the 12 major Brazilian media. An analysis of the manner and intent in which these communication media are mentioned will allow us to draw conclusions about the new communication dynamic established through the use of social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS

The bibliography on the interactions between protests and social media is extensive and gained greater strength in the academic field since 2010 (Gomes, 2018). There is, however, a wide range of approaches to the issue, as well as the consequences of this process. And this is reflected in a variety of terms used to refer to this interaction. There are new terminologies such as connective actions (Bennet & Seger-

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-use-of-twitter-during-the-2013-protests-in-brazil/238224

Related Content

When the Virtual and the Real Clash: Power and Politics in a Social Networking Community

Celia Romm Livermore (2010). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 42-54).

www.irma-international.org/article/when-virtual-real-clash/47199

Trolls Just Want To Have Fun: Electronic Aggression within the Context of e-Participation and Other Online Political Behaviour in the United Kingdom

Shefali Virkar (2014). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 21-51).

www.irma-international.org/article/trolls-just-want-to-have-fun/120197

AI-Driven Algorithms for Optimizing Social Media Advertising: Prospects and Challenges

Amaresh Jha (2024). *Cases on Social Media and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 63-84).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ai-driven-algorithms-for-optimizing-social-media-advertising/341983

The Illusion of Democracy in Online Consumer Restaurant Reviews

Morag Kobez (2016). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 54-65).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-illusion-of-democracy-in-online-consumer-restaurant-reviews/146200

Politicization of the Low-Carb High-Fat Diet in Sweden, Promoted On Social Media by Non-Conventional Experts

Christopher Holmberg (2015). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 27-42).

www.irma-international.org/article/politicization-of-the-low-carb-high-fat-diet-in-sweden-promoted-on-social-media-by-non-conventional-experts/132834