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Politics and Pop Culture

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Politics and Pop Culture: Premio Multishow, Werder Bremen, Barack Obama & Osama Bin Laden

By: David Clayton, Anthony Sudarmawan, and Andrea Bunting

The question this report attempts to answer is how important political figures compare to popular cultural entities, specifically, how do they compare on twitter? By observing the relationships between political and cultural topics we can better understand the political implications of twitter.

The method we used for comparison is the search engine archivist, which compiles all tweets discussing the topics we focused on. The searches themselves were relatively simple as we created searches using the names of our trending topics, Werder Bremen and Premio Multishow, as well as our political figures, Osama Bin Laden and Barack Obama. Because of the nature of the trending topic as a focal point of twitter it is safe to assume that these topics would accumulate substantial amounts of tweets, creating a barometer on which to measure the importance of political topics in the world of twitter. All of the searches where started at 11 a.m. August 25, 2010 and ended at 10:30 a.m. on August 27th, giving the searches a total of nearly 48 hours. The data came out as follows.

Werder Bremen, which is a German soccer club, amassed 2490 tweets over that 48 hour span. Given soccer clubs' foreign nature the vast majority of the tweets about it are not in English. Many of the tweets are discussing the impending arrival of Mikael Silvestre, a soccer player who is apparently being transferred to the club.

Premio Multishow, which seems to be a special event of a foreign entertainment channel, totaled 3650 tweets over the same 48 hour span. This number is considerably higher than the tweets regarding Werder Bremen but this difference between specific topics can be expected. Premio Multishow is again a foreign cultural topic and essentially all the tweets are in languages other than English. Despite my inability to read the exact words I did notice that many of the tweets contained links to photos, video, or some other coverage of the Premio Multishow.

The search for Osama Bin Laden yielded 838 messages that were sent on the topic. These messages were very interesting in that the majority did not discuss Bin Laden's actions per se, but rather used Bin Laden as the butt of a joke or a point of reference for some evil act. Bin Laden seems to be treated as more of an abstract concept than a real political person, which may account for the lower number of messages.

The search using the name Barack Obama totaled 2634 tweets over the duration of the search. The messages regarding Obama range from very optimistic showings of support to the president to mocking messages suggesting that the president is incompetent and will be done after one term in office. This range of messages about the president is not surprising given Obama's polarizing nature.

What this data shows us is that twitter is used for political purposes just as it is for cultural ones. Although the search on Barack Obama accumulated considerably fewer tweets than the Premio Multishow, it did slightly beat out the search on Werder Bremen, showing that given the right topic, politics can be found on twitter just as easily as pop culture. I was

surprised to see that the search for Osama Bin Laden totaled so many fewer messages than the other three topics. I believe that this is a result of time as Bin Laden has slowly slipped out of everyday conversation in the years following September 11th, 2001. Obama is simply a more "now" topic than Bin Laden and the instant nature of twitter lends itself to what is relevant today rather than historically.

Search topic	Barack Obama	Osama Bin Laden	Premio Multishow	Werder Bremen
# of tweets	2634	838	3650	2490