5 KEY THINGS LEARNT FROM TWITTER REGARDING THE NIGERIAN 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

At Kingmakers.com.ng we monitored the 2015 presidential election campaigns of the two major parties that participated, the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the People Democratic Party (PDP) by analyzing data from Twitter.

For close to 3 months, we harvested thousands of messages every day generated within a 50km radius of the borders of Nigeria and geo-locating the source of the tweets to states and major cities, and applied big data mining techniques, including sentiment analysis on the data to understand how effective both campaigns have been in getting their messages across and how their respective candidates match up.

Below are the 5 key things we learnt from monitoring tweets regarding the presidential campaigns.
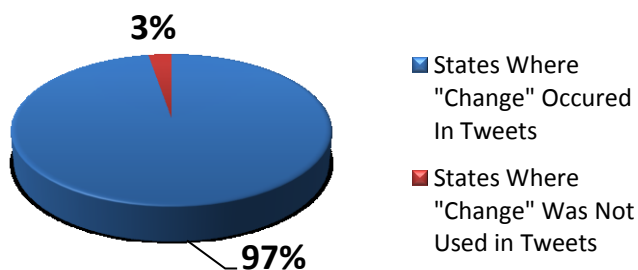
1. CHANGE WAS IN THE AIR

The APC's main campaign message of "Change" struck more of a chord with the electorate on Twitter than it did with the PDP's message of "Transformation". When we measured the number of people that had used each of the campaigns messages, APC's "Change" at 17% came in far higher than PDP's "Transformation" at 2%.
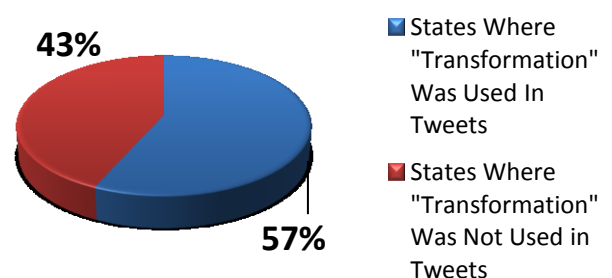
17%
CHANGE

2%
TRANSFORMATION

The term "Change" was also far more far spread than that of "Transformation", with the word appearing in election related messages that originated from Federal Capital Territory Abuja and all the states and the across the Nigeria except Ebonyi. While the term "Transformation" occurred in tweets originating from the Federal Capital Territory Abuja and 20 states across Nigeria, and failing to occur in tweets from the remaining 16 states.

CHANGE

- 3%
- States Where "Change" Occured In Tweets
- States Where "Change" Was Not Used in Tweets
- 97%

TRANSFORMATION

- 43%
- States Where "Transformation" Was Used In Tweets
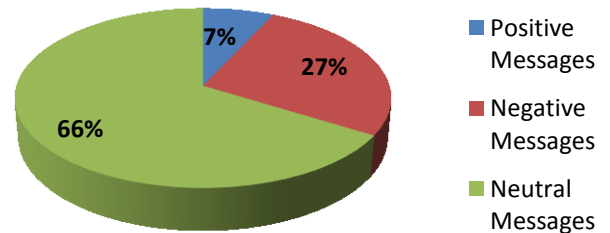- States Where "Transformation" Was Not Used in Tweets
- 57%

2. LUCK ON NOT ON JONATHAN'S SIDE

In the last election the presidential candidate for the PDP, President Goodluck Jonathan rode on a lot of goodwill from the people, and some would argue good luck as well, to clinch the presidency. However this time around, the reverse happened. We used sentiment analysis to get an idea of how many people saying positive or negative things about the candidates and found that for the President, more people tweeted negative messages than positive messages about him, We found exactly the opposite for his main opponent, Muhammadu Buhari, with more people posting positive messages about him than negative ones.

Sentiment Analysis for Buhari

24%

5%

71%

- Positive Messages
- Negative Messages
- Neutral Messages
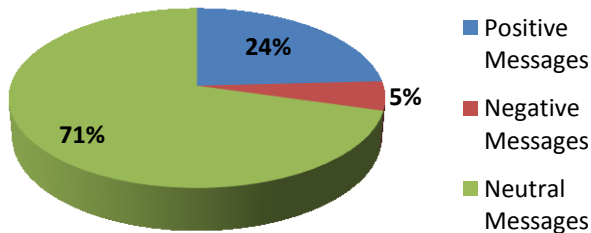
Sentiment Analysis for Jonathan

7%

27%

66%

- Positive Messages
- Negative Messages
- Neutral Messages

Over the period of the campaign people who posted messages about the presidential elections post positive messages about Buhari (24%) than they did about Jonathan (5%) by a rate of 3 to 1. The analysis also revealed that more people posted negative messages about President Jonathan (27%) than they did about General Buhari (5%).

3. ISSUES CAN WEIGH YOU DOWN

When it came to discussing issues around the present electoral process,the most prickly subject for people was the issue of corruption. It was by far the most talked about political issues, being mentioned more than twice as much as the next talked about issue, security.

People Discussing Political Issues

- Mentioned An Issue
- Didn't Mention An Issue

15%

85%

Issues Discussed
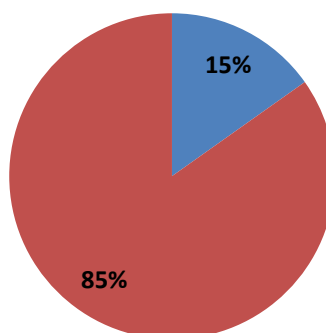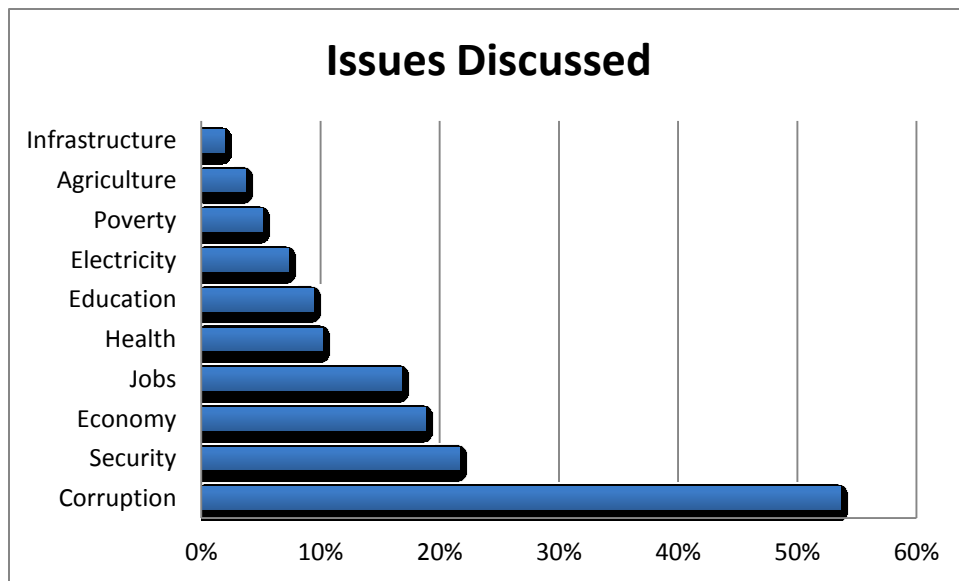
While 15% of the people who were tweeting about the election mentioned one of the major political issues shown in the graph above, when we had a closer look at that segment, we found that more than 54% of them mentioned it in their tweets.

Not only that, we found out that it was the top topic in all the six geopolitical zones, as well as the top topic in 27 states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

We also looked at how people felt about the candidates in relation in to political issues by carrying out a sentiment analysis on the tweets that mentioned a political issue and the candidate in the same tweet.

What we found is that for the top 4 major issues, which were discussed by more than 10% the people touching on an electoral issue, when it came positive messages, both candidates could only muster less than 5% of people having something positive to say.

However it was a different story when it came negative messages with President Jonathan generating far more negative messages, especially when it came to jobs, when close to 64% of the messages were negative.
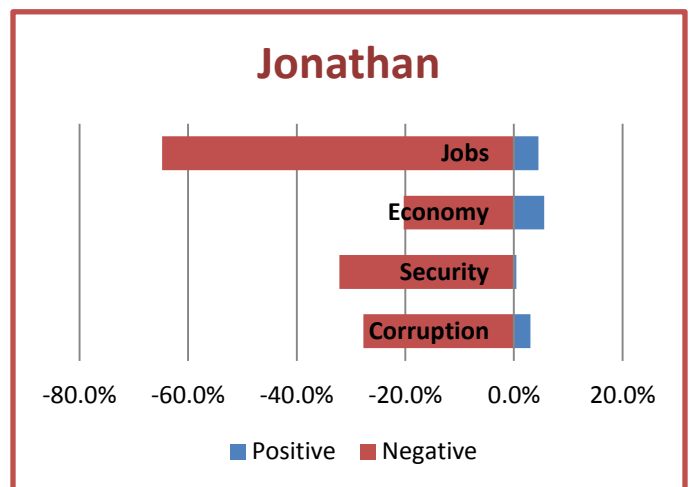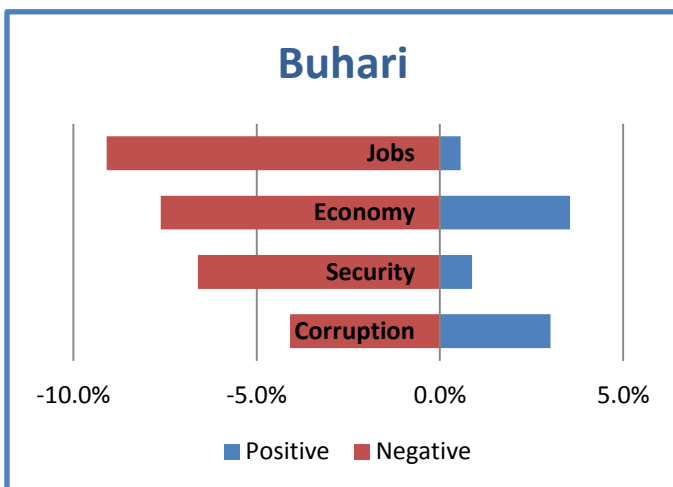
| ISSUE	BUHARI		JONATHAN	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Corruption	3.0%	4.1%	3.0%	27.7%
Security	0.9%	6.6%	0.4%	32.2%
Economy	3.6%	7.6%	5.6%	20.3%
Jobs	0.6%	9.1%	4.5%	64.8%

Buhari vs Jonathan: Major Political Issues

From the data above it shows that neither candidate performed particularly well when it came to the important issues, with both having more people who have a negative view of them than positive. However in the case of President Jonathan, it was often at least 3 times more than that of Buhari.

4. POSTPONEMENT OF THE INEVITABLE

It was speculated than the real reason behind the postponement of the elections from 14th of February by 6 weeks to the 28th of March was to blunt the momentum of the Buhari's campaign and claw back some advantage by for President Jonathan's campaign. However analysis of the tweets posted during the period leading to 14th February and those posted after that to the new date of the elections showed very little change in the support for either candidate.
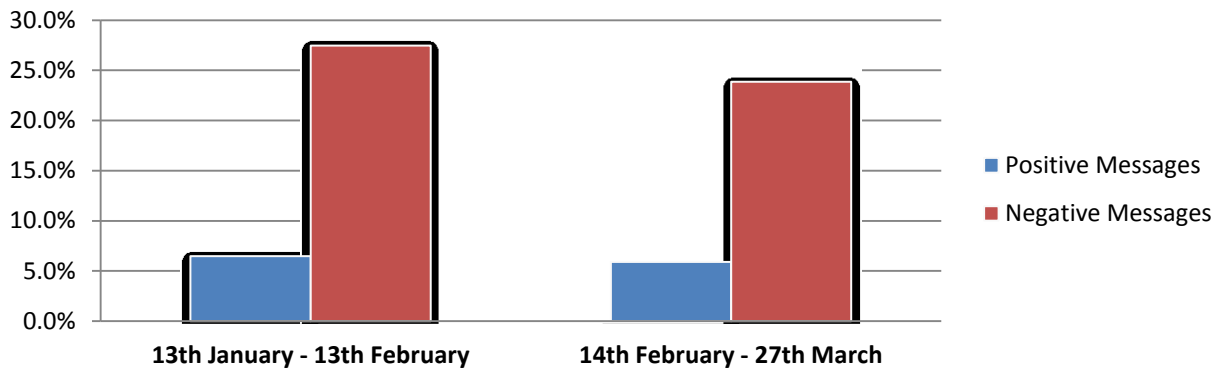
Percentage of People Menioning Party's Campaign Message
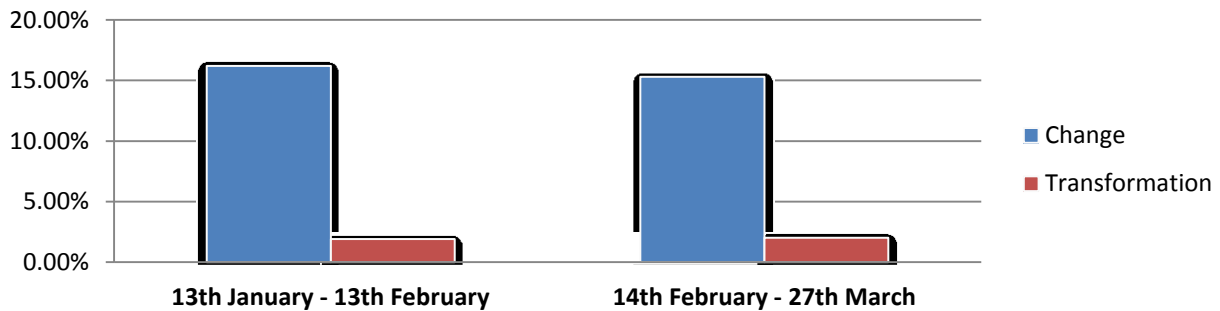
People Tweeting About Buhari
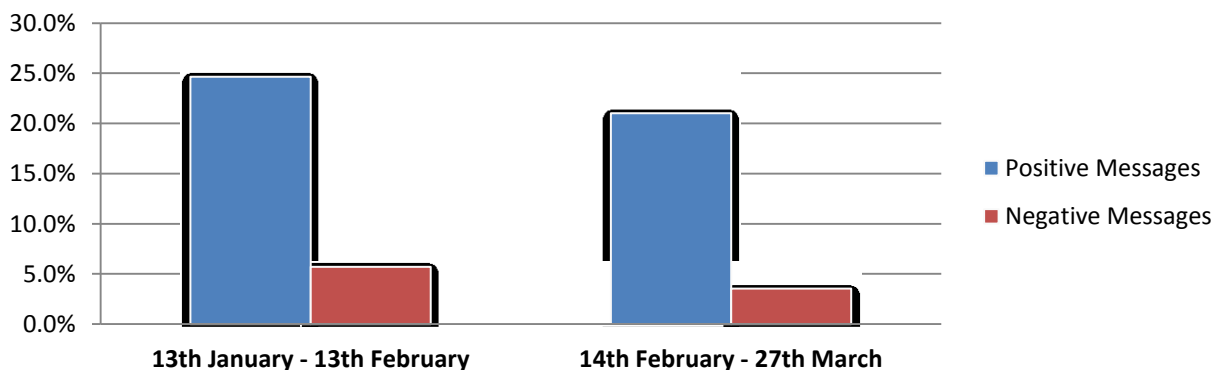
People Tweeting About Jonathan

5. THE PEOPLE ARE NOW THE KINGMAKERS

A common thread amongst those reporting about the elections is those who casted their votes wanted to ensure that their votes counted. There were stories written about people waiting for long hours in the rain and sun to cast their votes, and in some cases where counting of the votes went well into the night using torches or generating power to ensure that the electoral process was not disrupted and that the results of the polls were not manipulated. Independent observers generally described the election as free and fair. The people had spoken and their votes mattered.

One of reasons behind setting up Kingmakers.com.ng was to see if we could determine how people would vote in the upcoming elections by analyzing Twitter data and see if social media could be a good yardstick for predicting subsequent elections.

From some of the results that we have reported it was clear who Nigerians on Twitter wanted to be their President. On a national level, more people were likely to use the APC's main message of "Change" in their tweets about the election, more people were likely to post positive messages about the APC's candidate, Buhari, as well as post less negative messages in general.

Buahri ran an anti-corruption campaign, which incidentally happened to be most important issue to those discussing the elections on Twitter. Along with the next 3 top issues – Security, Economy and Jobs – more people had negative views of Jonathan than they did of Buhari.

All these pointed to a very likely Buhari victory.