



#UgandaDecides  
#UgandaDecides

# Analysis of Twitter Activity on Election Eve and Election Day in Uganda

Monitoring Uganda Elections Series 02  
#UgandaDecides

April 2016

INSTRUCTIONS:  
(Please read carefully)  
1. Mark an 'X' for your favorite candidate on the ballot paper.  
2. Fold the ballot paper only once to keep it secret.  
3. Put the ballot paper into the ballot box.

LOT PAPER  
ELECTION 2016

Candidate's Name	Candidate's Photograph	Party Symbol and Party Name or Independent Candidate's Symbol	Voter's Tick or Thumbprint
ABED BWANIKA		 PDP	
AMAMA MBABAZI		 INDEPENDENT	
BARYAMUREEBA VENANSIUS		 INDEPENDENT	
BENON BUTA BIRAARO		 FPU	
KIZZA BESIGYE KIFEFE		 FDC	
MABIRIZI JOSEPH		 INDEPENDENT	
MAUREEN FAITH KYALYA WALUUBE		 INDEPENDENT	
YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI		 NRM	



Uganda held presidential and parliamentary elections on February 18, 2016. In the lead-up to the elections, Uganda held the first presidential debates. See an [analysis of Twitter Activity](#) around the debates. Excitement about the election was palpable in online commentary on the eve of the elections. However, on the morning of the Election Day, many were unable to access social media sites including Facebook and Twitter, the popular money transfer service Mobile Money, and the mobile-based texting platform Whatsapp.

The national communications regulator, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), had [instructed](#) service providers to block access to these platforms in a bid to “protect public order and safety”. This action instead resulted in users turning to Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) in order to circumvent the blockage and exercise their right to freedom of expression, access and share information on the voting and vote tallying processes.



Figure 1: A tweet points out the violation of Freedom of Expression following the shutdown of social media platforms

President Yoweri Museveni defended the shutdown in a [press conference](#) saying, “There must be steps taken for security to stop so many creating trouble... it’s temporary. It will go away. Because some people misuse those pathways. You know how they misuse them, telling lies. If you want a right, then use it properly.” Further, the UCC [claimed](#) that the instruction to shut down social media was made by the Inspector General of Police Kale Kayihura.

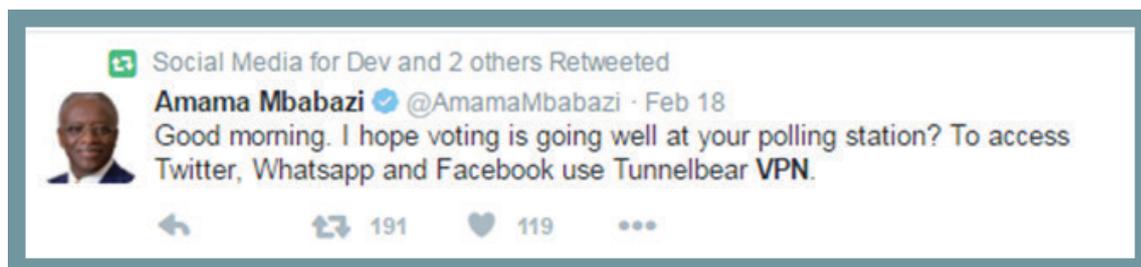


Figure 2: Amama Mbabazi, a candidate in the 2016 Uganda election advises tweeps on how to access social media despite the block

This report presents our findings from analysing the social media conversation on Twitter the day before Uganda’s presidential elections (February 17, 2016) and on Election Day (February 18, 2016), using the #UgandaDecides hashtag.

## Highlights

- #UgandaDecides trended globally despite a ban on social media access in Uganda.
- There was a rise in mention of the word Virtual Private Network (VPN) in tweets. One VPN (Trust.Zone) [reported](#) over 520,000 downloads on both computers and mobile phones in Uganda during the four days of shut down.
- There was a marked absence of bots (auto-generated accounts built to mimic human users), other than two which were identified on Election Day unlike during the election debates (#UgDebate16) during which over 5,000 bots were identified.
- The accounts of the media houses NBS TV (@nbstv), NTV (@ntvuganda) and the Daily Monitor (@DailyMonitor) dominated media presence on Twitter on both days due to the number of tweets they posted and the number of times they were retweeted.
- Findings indicate that on Election Day there was a definitive shift in the online emotional sentiment of Ugandan tweeters from one of positive anticipation (pre-election) to one characterised by suspicion, anger and disgust.

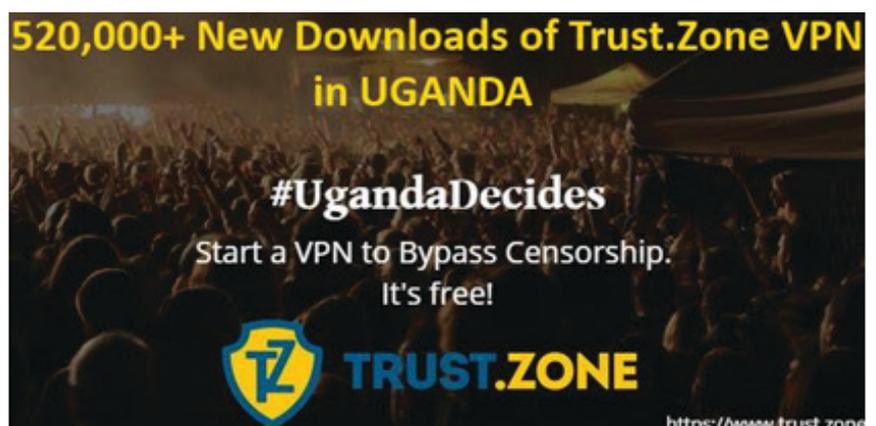


Figure 3: One of the VPNs that Uganda citizens used to access blocked platforms

Tweets were sourced through [tweetreach.com](http://tweetreach.com) and [www.hashtracking.com](http://www.hashtracking.com). The analysis is based upon a random selection from among the 180,000 tweets posted on February 17, 2016 and the 140,000 tweets posed on February 18, 2016. For each of the two days, a total of 70,000 tweets was selected for analysis. These tweets followed the #UgandaDecides conversation.

**Table 1: #UgandaDecides Figures**

Day	Number of tweets	Timeline	Analysed	Tweets with Hashtag #UgandaDecides
Election Eve 17th Feb 2016	180,000	12:00 – 24.00	70,000	90%
Election Day 18th Feb 2016	140,000	12:00 – 24.00	70,000	89%

- We extracted all data that used the election related hashtag #UgandaDecides using the Twitter Application Program Interface (API).
- We cleaned the data to remove stop words (i.e. words with limited meaning such as "and", "the", "a", "an"), links and any punctuations.
- Data analysis was then carried out using the [statistical programming language R](#), images were developed using [ggplot2 library](#) and the open source graphics tool [inkscape](#). All figures in the analysis were rounded off - percentages to the nearest whole number and numbers to the nearest thousand.



## Activity Levels

Locally and internationally there was anticipation of the elections, as international media focused on Uganda while local media narrated the last campaign efforts of the candidates. Online activity on the #UgandaDecides hashtag continued throughout the Election Eve, with more engagement in the afternoon than in the morning. On Election Day, despite shut down of social media, Twitter activity remained rife from the afternoon till midnight.

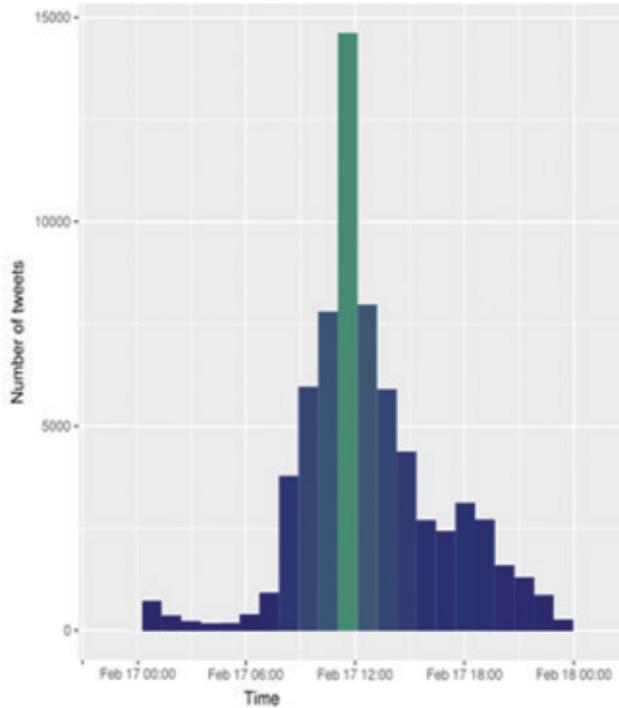


Figure 4: Graph showing Twitter activity over the course of Election Eve

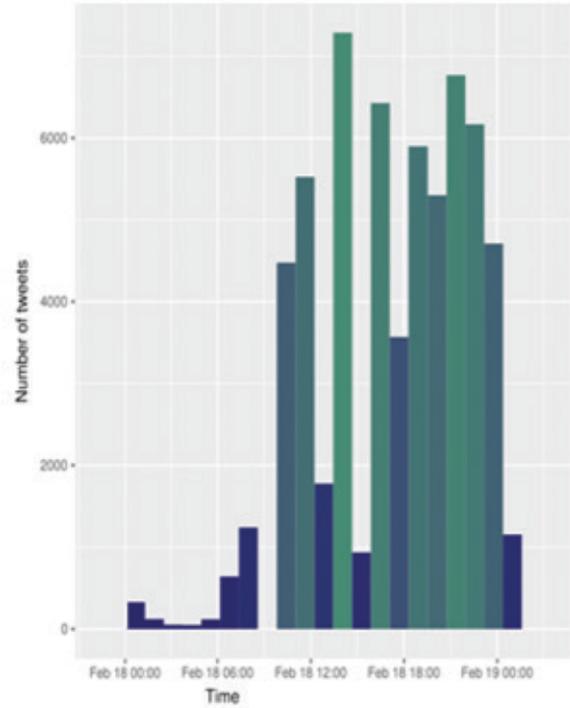


Figure 5: Graph showing Twitter activity over the course of Election Day

## Audience Engagement

On Election Day, likely due to the limited number of users on Twitter as a result of the block on social media, there were 22% fewer tweets (140,000) shared than on the Election Eve (180,000). Within the data set, we analysed the tweets shared using the #UgandaDecides hashtag, those retweeted and those replied to in order to determine Twitter interaction. For both days, a large number of tweets (68%) under the #UgandaDecides hashtag were retweets, indicating limited original content in comparison to retweeted content.

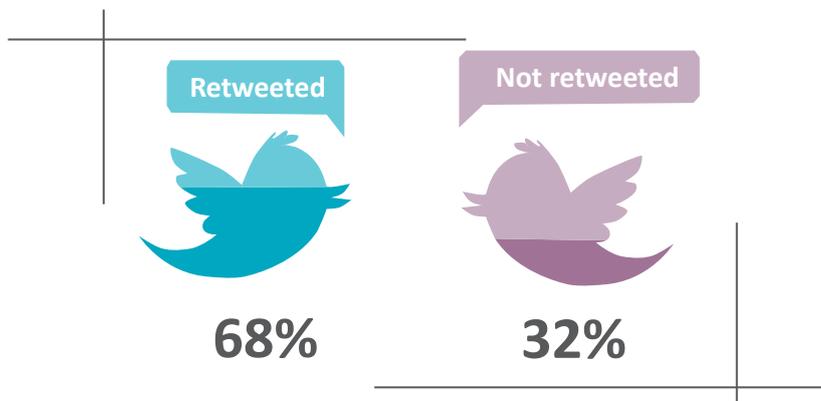


Figure 6: Retweeted Vs. Not retweeted tweets on Election Eve and Election Day

The conversation registered few actual replies to tweets with most people opting to retweet content than to continue or formulate a discussion.

## Who Curated the Online Conversation?

The anticipation leading up to Election Day was prevalent in many tweets. The top ten tweeters who dominated the online conversation on Election Eve through their tweets and re-tweets of their content were not media houses but ordinary users. Among them, @jude\_mugabi, a tweek who describes himself as a “Struggling Materials Engineer + Ent-app-reneur | Avid sports fan” and has a following of over 9,000; and @SheilaTMugisha, a journalist with NBS TV with a following of 680. The bulk of her tweets were retweets of content from @NBSTV while @Jude\_Mugabi posted original tweets and retweets.



The only media house that ranked in the top 10 accounts shaping the online conversation on Election Eve was NBS television (@nbstv). However, also ranking in the top 30 were the accounts of the radio stations Galaxy FM and Power FM.

On Election Day, there was a marked absence of tweets from media houses in curating discourse online. The #UgandaDecides hashtag was dominated by tweets belonging to ordinary user accounts like @TGE4Uganda, @RedLipSteeq and @bwesigye while @Jude\_Mugabi and @MukamaThe also maintained a presence from the previous day.

Figure 7: Screenshots of the accounts of some of the top tweeps

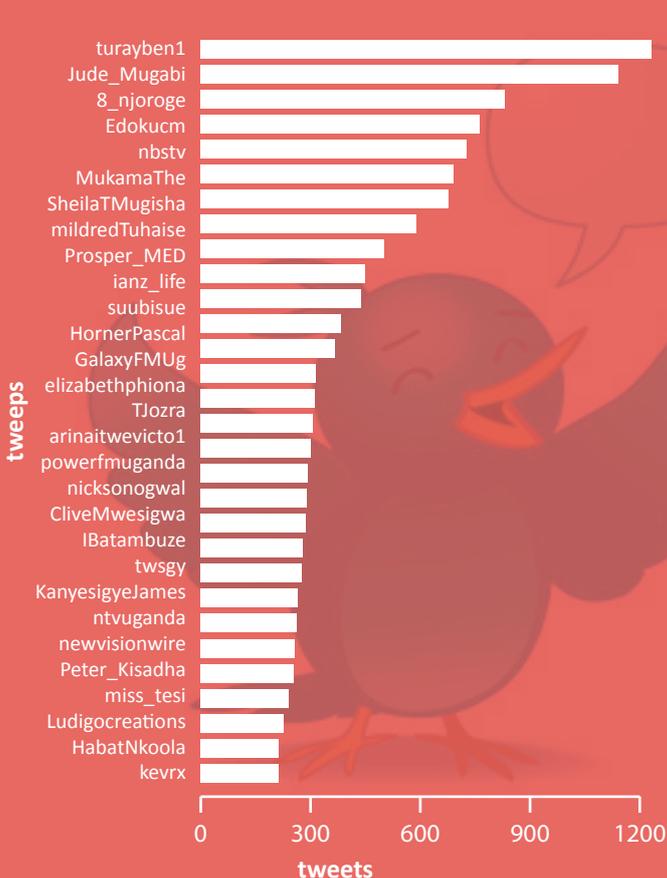


Figure 8: Top 30 tweeters by tweets on Election Eve February 17, 2016

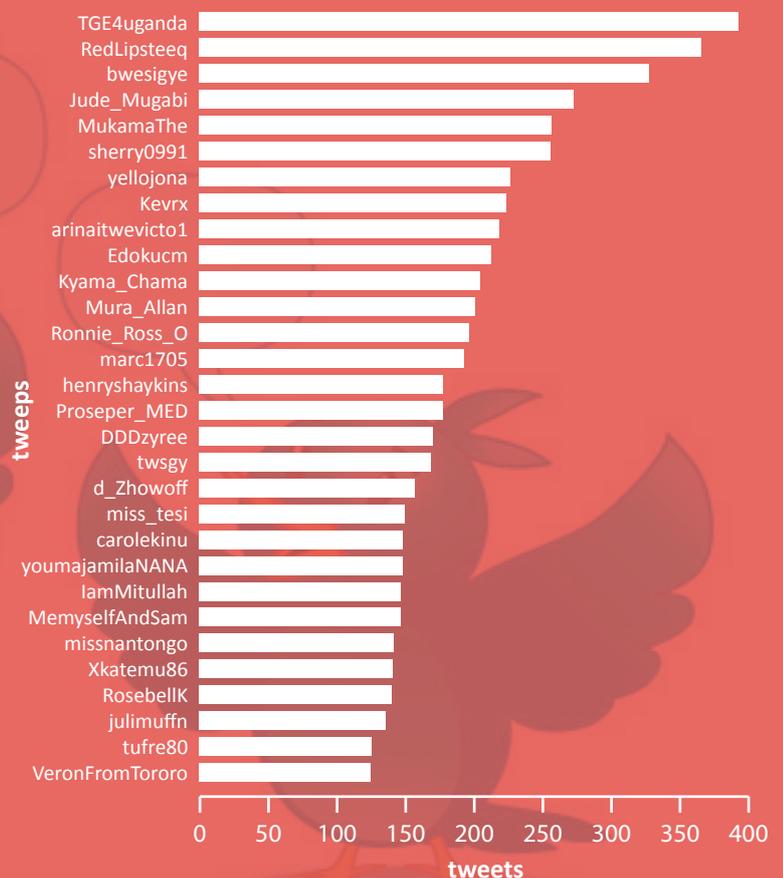


Figure 9: Top 30 tweeters by tweets on Election Day February 18, 2016

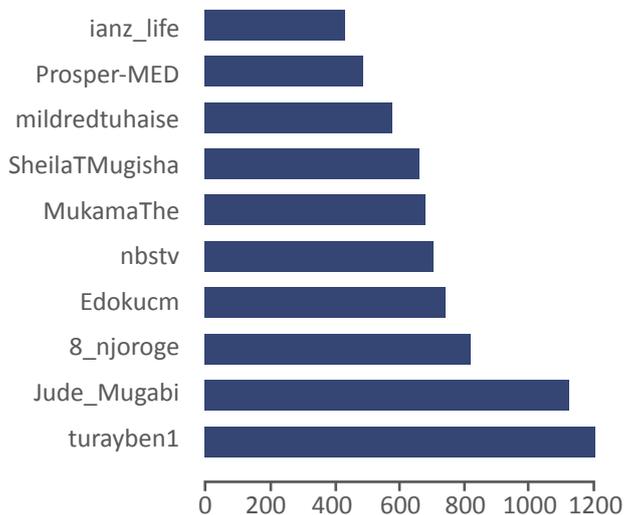


Figure 10: Top 10 tweeters on Election Eve

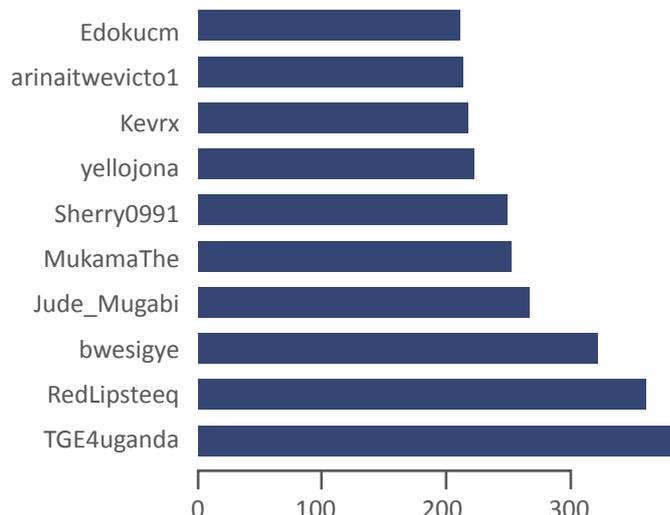


Figure 11: Top 10 tweeters on Election Day

Table 2: Account summary of the Top 10 tweeters on Election Eve<sup>1</sup>

Handle	Name	Account Description	No. of Tweets	No. of Followers	Bot	Media House
@turayben1	Ben Turay	#UgandaDecides #Uganda #Museveni	1,313	10	✓	
@Jude_Mugabi	The Usual Suspect	Struggling Materials Engineer + Ent-app-reneur   Avid sports fan   News junkie (love keeping informed)   Introvert Mummy's boy   GoodFella   REALigion   Hall of Famer	436K	9,028	✗	
@8_njoroge	Isaac Njoroge	Always break the rules #hiphop #boxing #politics break the rules #hiphop #boxing #politics	1,476	7	✓	
@Edokucm	Conrad M. Edoku	Journal   ExquisiteWriter   HealthColumnist @Campusbeeug & Straight Talk Foundation   LeadBrain @MbaleGotSwagg   Tweets are my Opinion, RTs are just that.	10.7K	4,205	✗	
@nbstv	NBS Television	ALWAYS CONSISTENT, ALWAYS INFORMATIVE, ALWAYS ENTERTAINING. MAKE US PART OF YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. THIS IS #NBSTelevision #NBSAlways	62.9K	65K	✗	✓
@MukamaThe	The Mukama	Least anticipated, still the most wanted. #hiphopafficionado #fugeesfan. like all things old (vintage) still a sucker for all things natural	6,659	887	✗	
@sheilaTMugisha	Sheila T. Mugisha	Journalist @NBSTV. Mother. Wife.	3,384	689	✗	
@mildredtuhaise	Mildred Tuhaise	News anchor, Show host at NBS TV, all round reporter. I believe that nothing is impossible in life, only challenging.	11.2K	3,921	✗	
@prosper_MED	Prosper Ahimbisibwe	Former GRC Sch Medicine @MakerereUMBChBOMunyakigezi   ED@YACOH_Uganda #Rotaracter #HealthEntrepreneur #TFarmer #JISSC2016 @PanAfrica101	26.8K	2,671	✗	
@ianz_life	Ian. M. Oswald	Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored !!!!! #Uganda Wait I didn't introduce myself, Here <a href="https://goo.gl/H20mm5">https://goo.gl/H20mm5</a>	12.6K	1,968	✗	

<sup>1</sup> Account status as at March 23, 2016

On both days, there was an absence of candidates' Twitter handles amongst the most active tweeters unlike during the Presidential debates. Further, there was a drop in the number of bots during both days. Only two @turayben1 and @8\_njoroge ranked high on the eve of elections.<sup>2</sup> On Election Day, there was an absence of bots. During the presidential debates, the [use of bots](#) was prominent to drive up online presence. An estimated 5,000 bots were used to tweet during the second presidential debate – primarily popularising content for the incumbent, Yoweri Museveni.

None of the top 10 active accounts on Election Day was from a media house or journalist affiliated with a local media house.

**Table 3: Account summary of the Top 10 tweeters on Election Day<sup>3</sup>**

Handle	Name	Description	No. of Tweets	No. of Followers	Bot	Media House
@Edokucm	Conrad M. Edoku	Journal   ExquisiteWriter   HealthColumnist@Campusbeug & Straight Talk Foundation   LeadBrain@MbaleGotSwagg   Tweets are my Opinion, RTs are just that.	10.7K	4,205	X	X
@arinaitwevicto1	Arinaitwe Victor	Economist & Struggling Author. #TGE. A Gunner 4 life #COYG	23.3K	1,425	X	X
@kevrx	KeV	Stay Hungry     Stay Foolish   ©	81.7K	2,369	X	X
@yellojona	YelloJona	Ugandan   IT Consultant   Website and Graphics Designer   Blogger   Torrid Model   Very Sapiosexual   Sports Fanatic   color #FFFF00   80's baby   Aug born	33.2K	1,414	X	X
@sherry0991	Miss Sharifa	Public Relations + Strategic communication.	34.3K	826	X	X
@MukamaThe	The Mukama	least anticipated, still the most wanted. #hiphopafficionado #fugeesfan. like all things old (vintage) still a sucker for all things natural	6,659	887	X	X
@Jude_Mugabi	The Usual Suspect	Struggling Materials Engineer + Ent-app-reneur   Avid sports fan   News junkie (love keeping informed)   Introvert   Mummy's boy   GoodFella   REALigion   Hall of Famer	436K	9,028	X	X
@bwesigye	Bwesigye	Leopard-phobic Born: Kabale Raised: Nyanja Residence: Kampala Carries Ugandan passport (national, citizen what what) African, Black, Person of Colour, Mukiga.	18.8K	3,507	X	X
@RedLipsteeq	WhosThatChic	The Khaleesi. The views expressed here belong to me and the voices in my head.	78.2K	2,875	X	X
@TGE4Uganda	TusabaGavument	#Ugandan catch phrase. But our #state of mind isn't #enslaved by it though. #TGE putting the #government and citizens on spot	5,617	565	X	X

<sup>2</sup> As at March 29, 2016, these two Bot accounts have been suspended on Twitter.

<sup>3</sup> Account status as at March 23, 2016

## Media Presence Challenged

Local media presence over both days was dominated by the television stations accounts - @nbstv and @ntvuganda. On Election Eve, @nbstv reaped over 8,000 retweets followed by @ntvuganda with just over 3,600 retweets. On Election Day, @nbstv had over 4,000 retweets and was followed by the news publication @DailyMonitor with 2,500 retweets.

On the eve of elections, it was Ugandan media houses present in the top 10 media accounts. However, on Election Day, the accounts of BBC Africa (@BBCAfrica) and Al-Jazeera correspondent based in Uganda Malcom Webb (@MalcomWebb) featured amongst the top 10 media. The accounts of Citizen TV Kenya (@citizenykenya) and NTV Kenya (@NTVKenya) were also engaged with at least 500 tweets respectively over both days.

Competing for presence alongside media houses were candidates' personal and party accounts as well as the Electoral Commission's account (@UgandaEC). The accounts of the candidates were mostly active on Election Eve as they encouraged citizens to vote.



Figure 12: Tweet from the New Vision quoting Kaguta Museveni

The account of the Uganda Electoral Commission appeared among most popular accounts on the Election Eve and on Election Day. However, further analysis revealed that the account ranked particularly high because tweeters were sending queries and pointing out electoral process concerns to the Commission's account. The account did not respond to tweets. Media houses were generating original content which tweeters were retweeting, while candidate accounts gained prominence due to people tweeting at them, even though they did not necessarily respond to tweeters or produce original tweets.

Individuals who also had a strong online presence included - Grace Natabaalo (@Natabaalo), Evelyn Namara (@enamara), Anne Mugisha (@annemugisha) and Samira Salwani (@samirasalwani). The account of Winnie Byanyima (@winniebyanyima) featured prominently as she spoke out on the events following the arrest of her husband, presidential candidate Kizza Besigye for "criminal trespass". Tweeters responded by tweeting at her and retweeting tweets from her account contributing to the popularity of her account on Election Day with an equal number of mentions as the Besigye account (@kizzabesigye1).

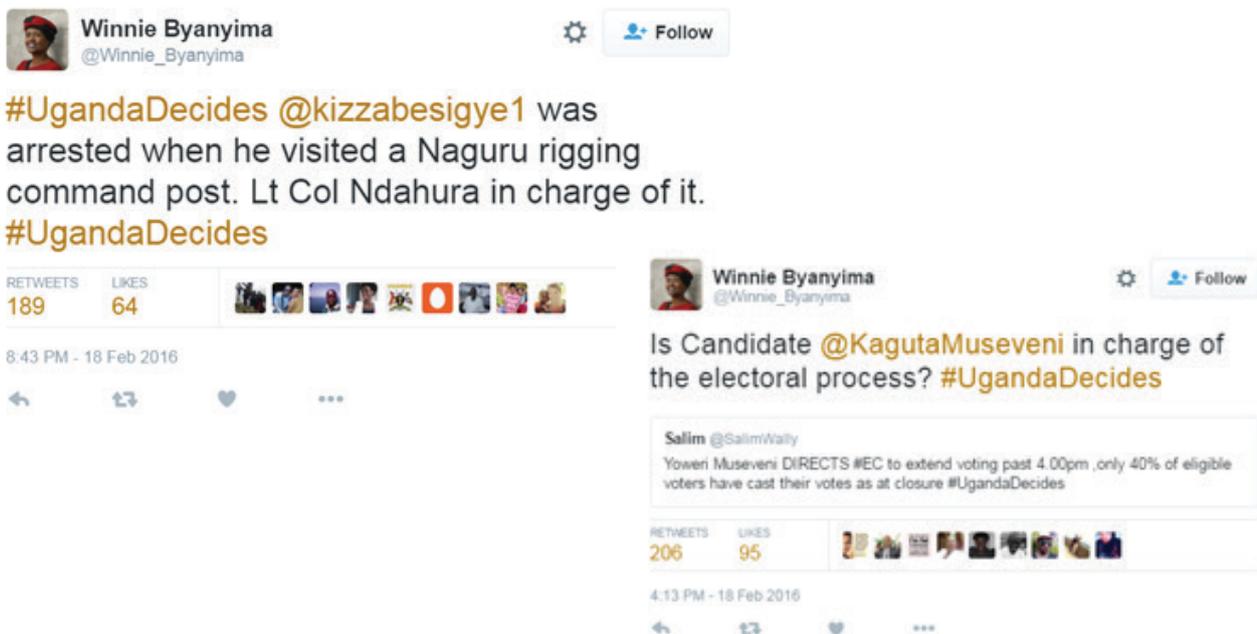


Figure 13: Winnie Byanyima tweets narrating events in the Kampala suburb of Naguru, another querying the President on electoral processes

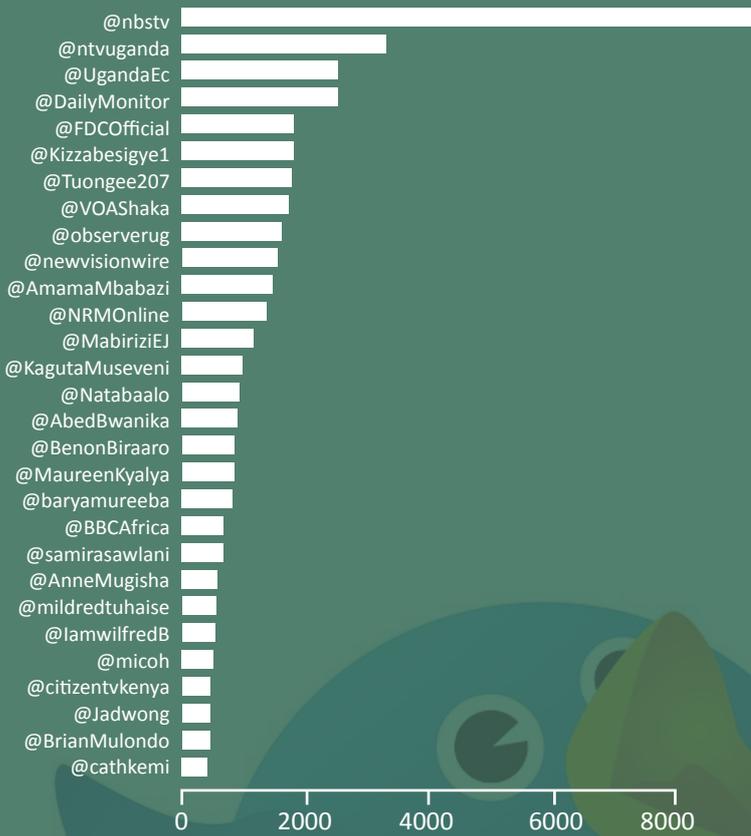


Figure 14: Most popular accounts – media and candidates - by presence in tweets Election Eve

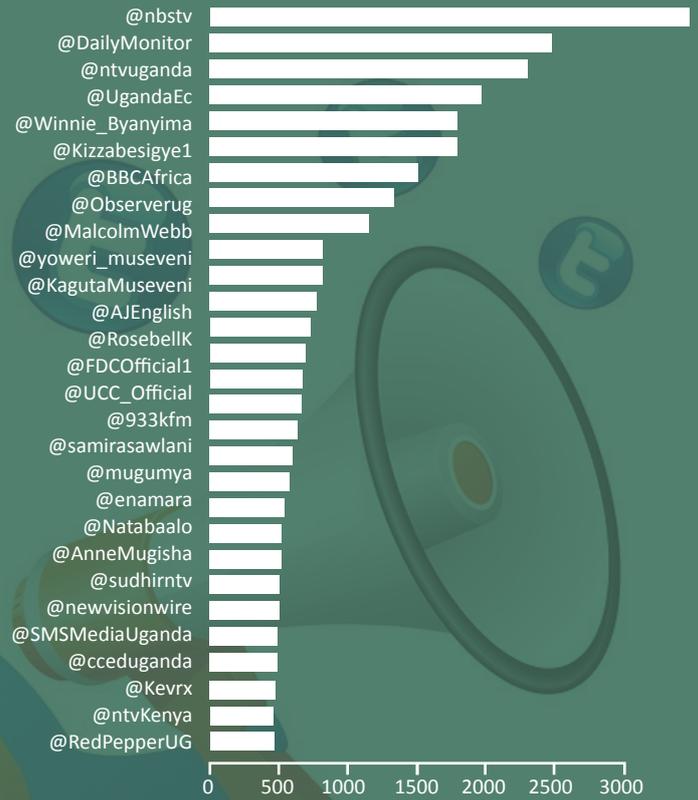


Figure 15: Most popular accounts – media and candidates - by presence in tweets Election Day

## Media Houses Compete Online

As was the case with the Twitter conversation around the presidential debates (#UgDebate16), NBS TV (@nbstv) remained a key media house that tweeters referred to in their tweets on the Elections Eve. Its closest challenge was from NTV (@ntvuganda) which received reference in tweets 2,000 times.

However, on Election Day, there was a drop in the overall mention of media houses. The accounts of the television stations NTV and NBS were on par with 2,000 mentions each in tweets and retweets while the Daily Monitor had 1,400 mentions and the New Vision had less than 500 mentions.

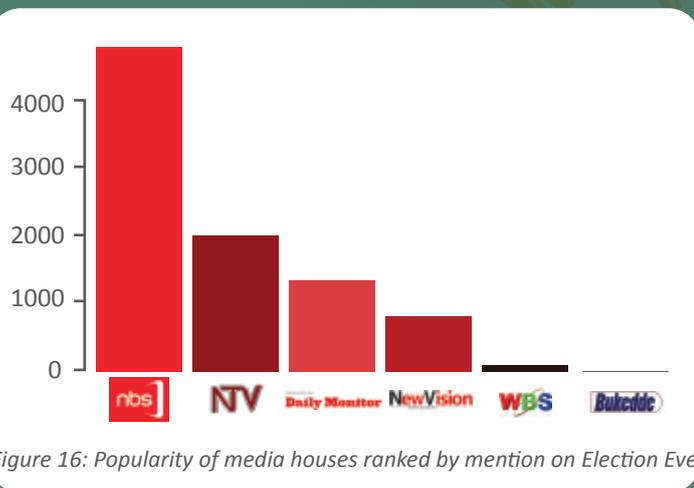


Figure 16: Popularity of media houses ranked by mention on Election Eve

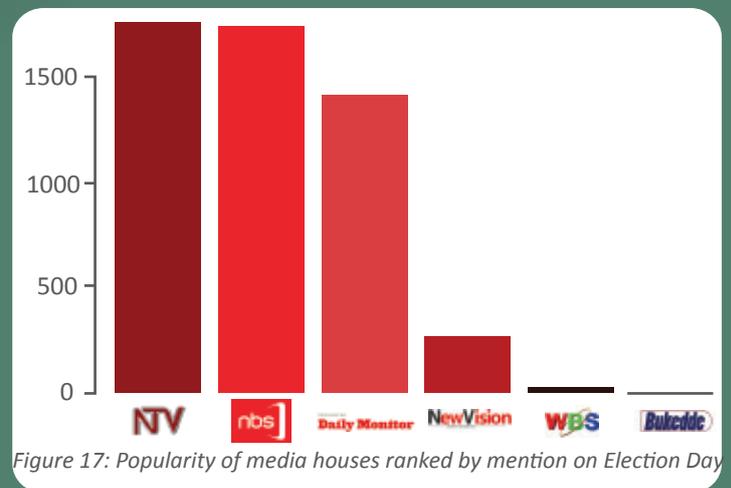


Figure 17: Popularity of media houses ranked by mention on Election Day


@samagona
⚙️
Follow

Hey @ntvuganda thanks for that footage at Naguru, @kizzabesigye1 is doing what no Ugandan can do! Showing dirt in the system #UgandaDecides

RETWEETS: 20    LIKES: 6
 

9:01 PM - 18 Feb 2016







Clare Athieno  
@claregorgeous
⚙️
Follow

Those watching & hopping btn relevant TV stations which station has given you the best #UgandaDecides coverage btn @nbstv & @ntvuganda

RETWEET: 1    LIKE: 1
 

9:08 PM - 18 Feb 2016






Figure 18: Tweeps tuned into television also took to Twitter for more information on Election Day.


Irene Ikumu @miss\_\_rizzy · Feb 18  
 @KagutaMuseveni now holds 51% & @kizzabesigye1 holds 44% of the provisional results. Besigye has closed the gap by over 15% #UgandaDecides


 16     4    

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Evelyn Lirri  
@Elirri
⚙️
Following

@miss\_\_rizzy @KagutaMuseveni @kizzabesigye1 But the results from NBS so far seem far different from that reported by NTV? #UgandaDecides

RETWEETS: 2    LIKE: 1
 

10:55 PM - 18 Feb 2016






Figure 19: Tweeters closely followed the results presented across different stations, often querying varying differences between stations

## Candidate Mentions in Conversation

The account of opposition leader Kiiza Besigye (@kizzabesigye1) featured prominently in online conversations, followed by that of incumbent Yoweri Museveni (@KagutaMuseveni) then Amama Mbabazi (@amamambabazi) on both days. However, there was a marked drop in the mention of other candidates including Amama Mbabazi on Election Day as conversation revolved around conversations amongst supporters of Museveni and Besigye. Dialogue shifted to focus on the detention and mishandling of Besigye during which online sentiments took on a tone of anger and sadness.

Although tweeps were tweeting at candidates, they rarely received responses from the accounts.

On Election Day, there were over 6,000 tweets which featured the @kizzabesigye1 handle as compared to the Election Eve during which the account received mention 3,500 times. Tweets directed at Museveni also rose as users directly queried the social media shutdown and the arrest of Besigye, while others commented on the emerging poll results.



Figure 20: Candidate mentions in Tweets

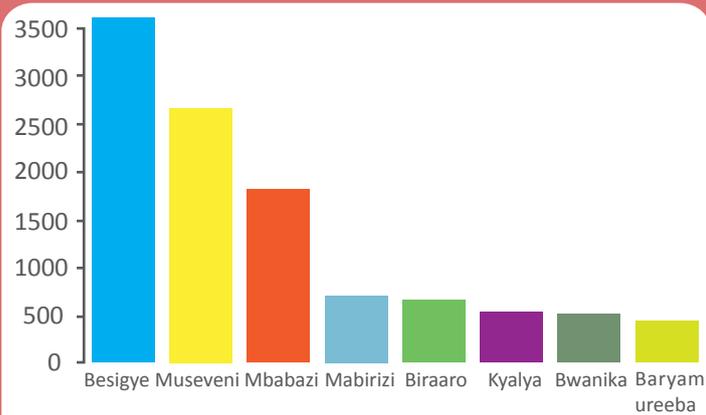


Figure 21: Uganda presidential candidates 2016 Twitter mentions on February 17

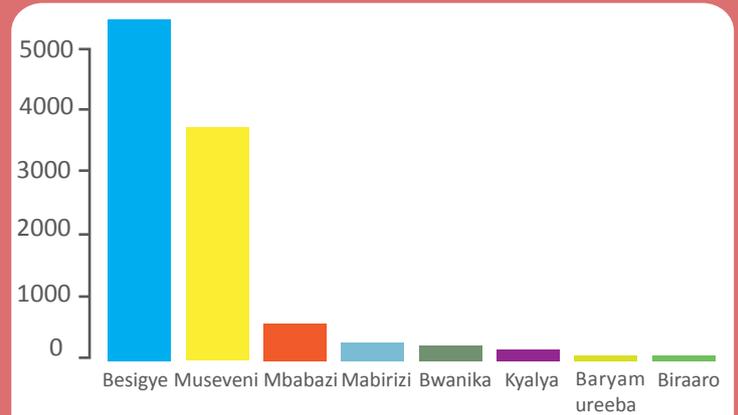


Figure 22: Uganda presidential candidates 2016 Twitter mentions February 18

## Polarity

This study referred to the NRC Emotion Lexicon to associate emotion to the words used in tweet content. The lexicon is built upon sentiments which were collected manually and associated with eight basic emotions (anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust) and three sentiments (negative, neutral and positive).

For both days, a positive sentiment was maintained in nearly 40,000 of the 70,000 tweets analysed despite the blockage of access to social media on Election Day. It is possible that a positive sentiment remained as tweeps expressed excitement at overcoming the crackdown through the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).

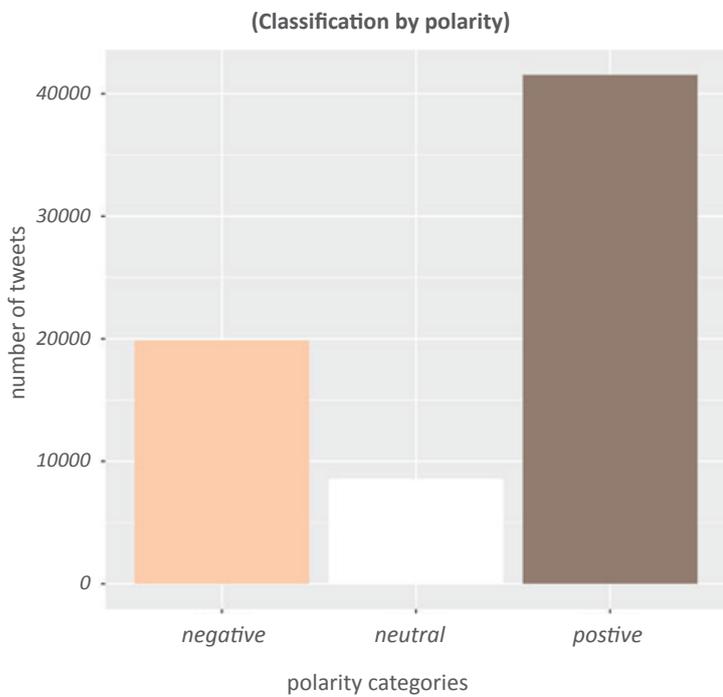


Figure 23: Emotional Polarities Election Eve

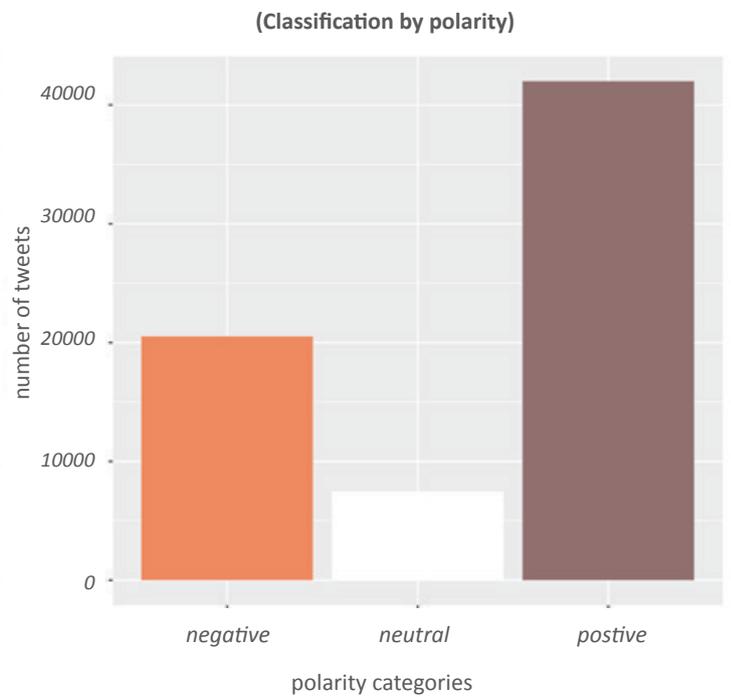


Figure 24: Emotional Polarities Election Day

During the debates, tweeters displayed sentiments of trust, anticipation and excitement in the lead up to elections. These sentiment continued to the day before elections with tweeps maintaining a positive outlook on the elections – or displaying a positive outlook despite uncertainty in the electioneering process and eventual outcome.

On Election Day, there was a marked increment in the emotion of anger – this was due to delayed arrival of voting materials and fuelled by the social media shutdown. Also on Election Day, there was a slight drop in anticipation and a slight increase in sadness. Compared to the eve of elections, there was also a slight reduction in the emotions of ‘surprise’, ‘joy’ and ‘anticipation’ on election day.

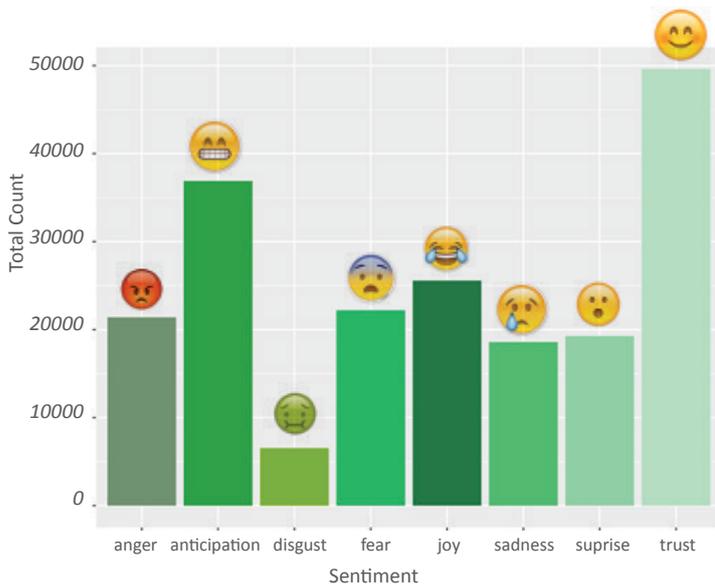


Figure 25: Sentiment analysis Election Eve

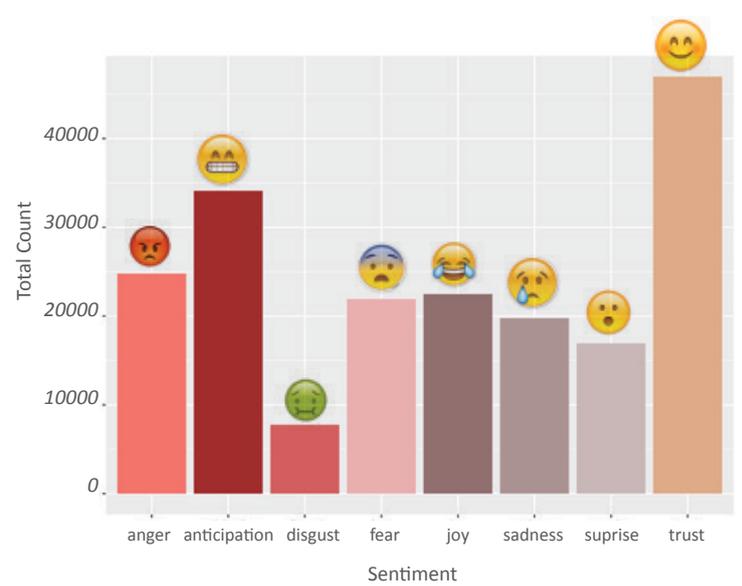


Figure 26: Sentiment analysis Election Day

Underpinning many of the tweets on the Election Eve was a sentiment of fear particularly around the security of the elections with words such as “bullets” and the “Inspectorate General of Police (IGP)” being among the mentions in tweets of fear.

On Election Day the sentiment of joy is seen around the use of words such as “social media” (those who accessed using VPNs repeatedly expressed excitement), as well as the words “information” and “security” possibly indicating the capacity to access information and the security offered by the use of VPNs. However, the sentiment of anger rose and was present in tweets containing the words “armed” and “fled” as reports of armed plain clothes individuals at an alleged rigging centre surfaced on Twitter and in the news. There were also perceptions of fear in relation to words such as “phones”. This was probably due to a perception of surveillance of communication or the effect of the unavailability of mobile money services and the perceived ban on the use of mobile phones at polling stations.

Words in tweets indicating the sentiments of fear turned from questioning the credibility of elections to safety concerns and death particularly on Election Day. These emotions are reflective of the issues that formed the basis of tweet content.

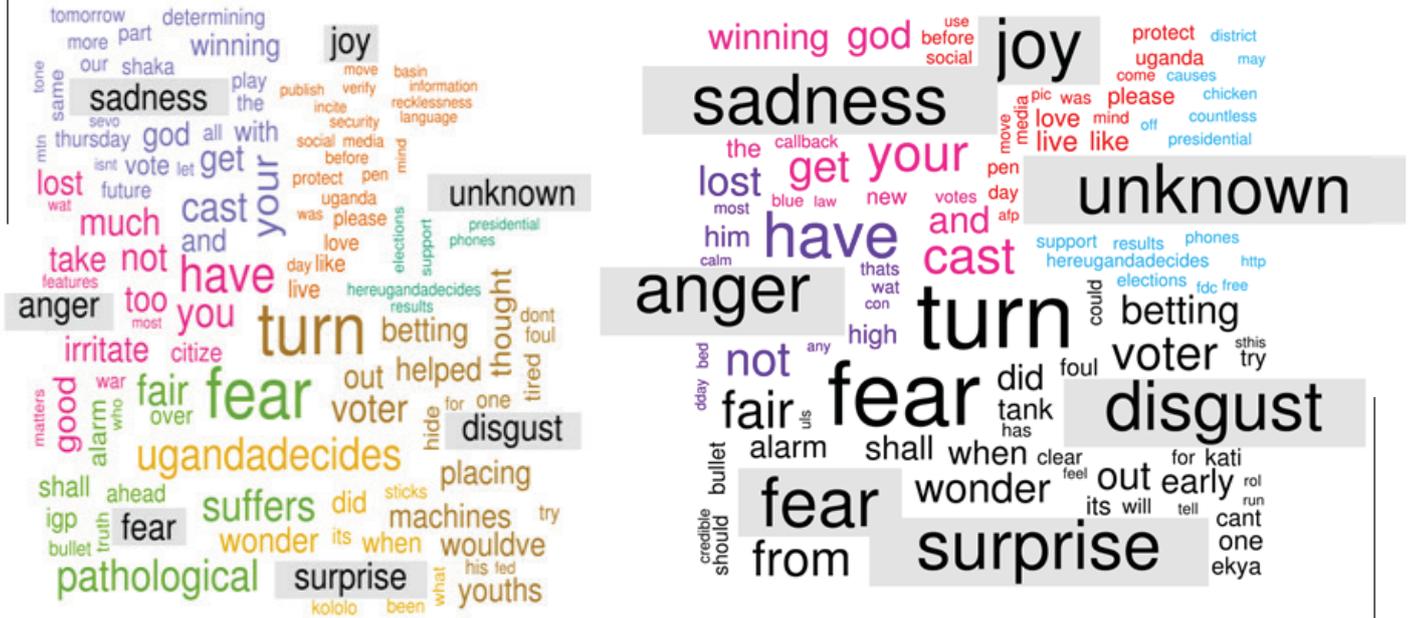


Figure 27: Word clouds of recurring emotions in the #UgandaDecides Twitter conversation on Election Eve

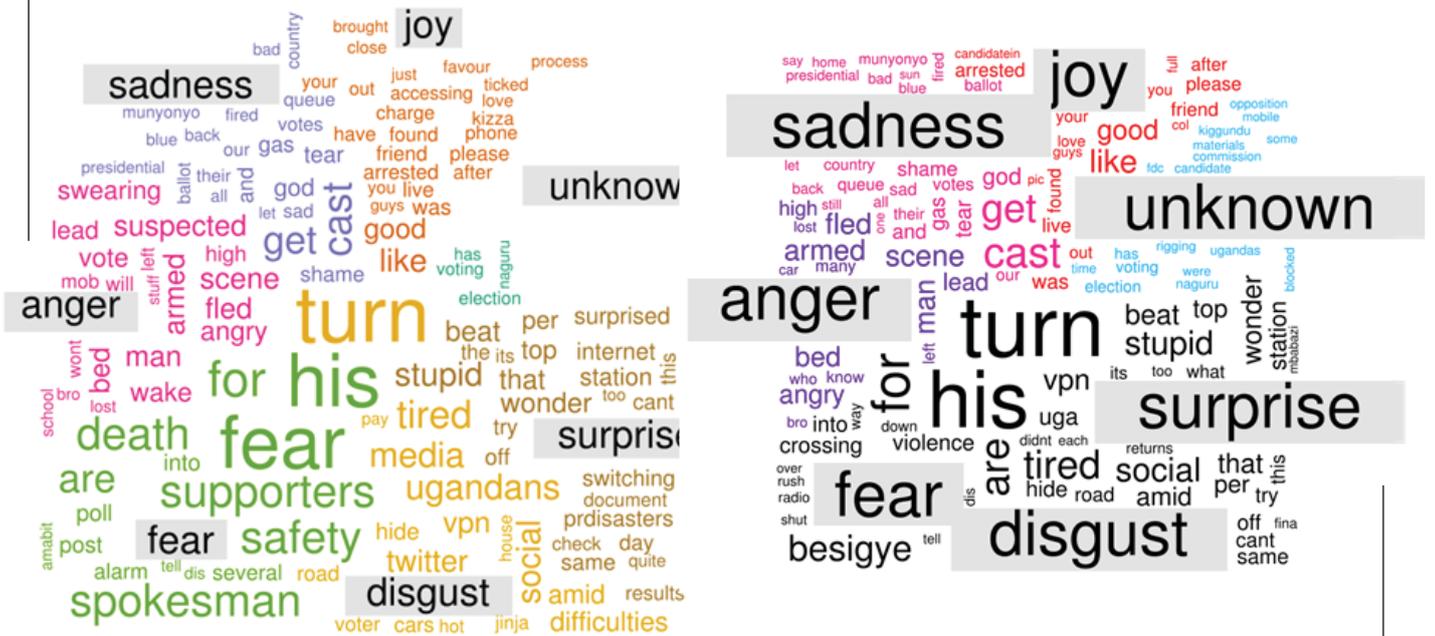


Figure 28: Word cloud of recurring emotions in the #UgandaDecides Twitter conversation on Election Day

## The Path Conversation Took Over the Two Days

On the eve of the elections, many tweets featured content from NBS TV Twitter account as well as tweets directed at the television station. Tweeters were discussing the candidates – primarily Besigye and Museveni and to a smaller extent Mbabazi with many calling for a peaceful election and encouraging each other to vote. Also receiving repeated reference in tweets was the Electoral Commission (EC) Chairperson Badru Kiggundu.

By evening, as the day drew to a close, the online conversation featured Besigye more than Museveni while the EC Chairman gained prominence, appearing in more tweets than he had earlier in the day. NBS TV remained the main media house that tweeters referred to all through the day. Underscoring tweets through the course of the day was the theme, “I will vote”.

Close to midnight, mention of candidates had reduced. However, the EC chairman remained present in many tweets at this time as tweeters discussed the actual voting process with words like “results”, “phones”, “polling” and “stations” coming up in tweets. Many were questioning the use of phones at polling stations following a misunderstanding on the use of phones inside voting booths – phones were allowed around voting stations but were not to be used inside voting booths.

In the morning of Election Day, tweeters were talking about “Uganda”, the “elections”, “voting” while some were already tweeting about “tomorrow”. The media houses NBS TV, NTV and the Daily Monitor also formed part of the conversation as tweeps retweeted them and directed tweets and responses at them.

By afternoon, tweeters were discussing the social media shutdown and how they overcame it with words like “Facebook”, “Twitter”, and “VPN” featuring in tweets. Further, there was discussion on the delayed arrival of ballot materials at some polling stations. Tweeters were not referring to media as much as they had on the eve of elections, instead pointing queries to the accounts of the Uganda Communications Commission (@UCC\_Official) and the Electoral Commission (@UgandaEC).

In the evening, Museveni featured in various ways including through the hashtag #MuseveniDecides, the words “Kaguta Museveni” and “Museveni” while Kiggundu received less attention. The account of the Electoral Commission remained present in tweets as tweeters continued to tweet at it. Further, Winnie Byanyima gained presence over the course of the afternoon as she posted on the developments surrounding Besigye’s movements, including his involvement in a scuffle outside a property he claimed was involved in vote rigging, and his eventual arrest.

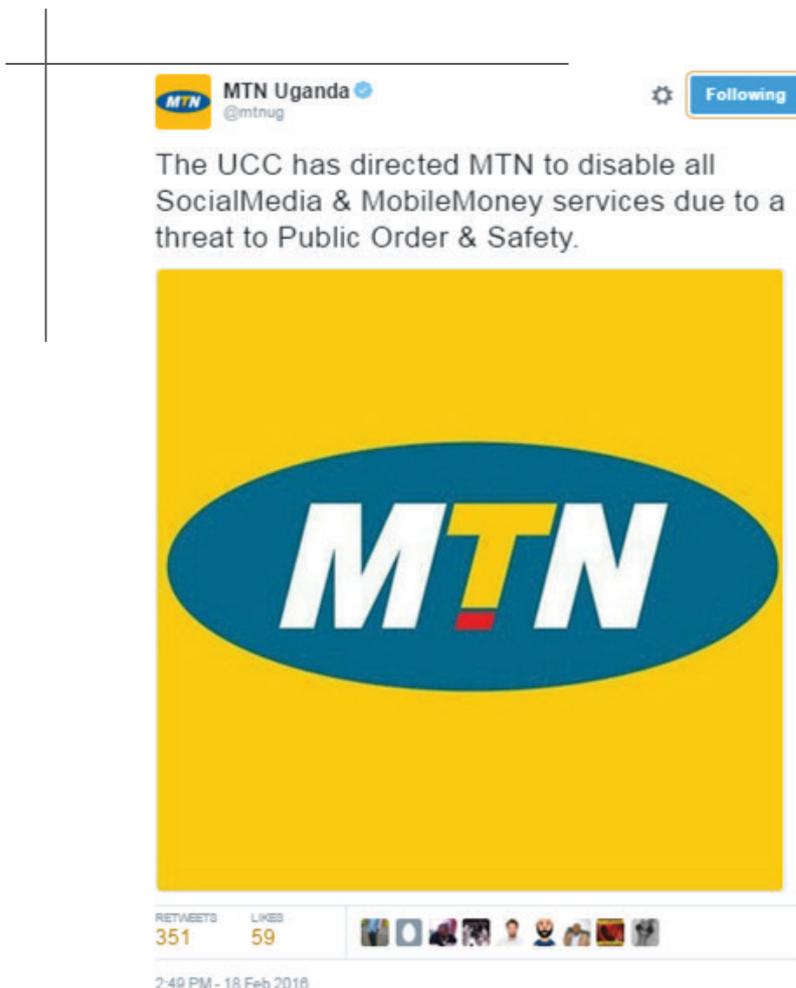


Figure 29: MTN's statement on the social media shutdown

## Comparison of #UgandaDebate16 and #UgandaDecides Use in the Uganda Election Twitter Discourse

The total number of Twitter users in Uganda remains unknown. Nonetheless the site [ranks 6th](#) as the most visited website in Uganda as of April 2016. The electioneering period saw over 540,000 tweets shared among Uganda tweeters over four select days. Analysis done using the hashtag #UgandaDebate16 during the first live televised presidential debates saw a total of 220,000 tweets shared over 10 hours while the hashtag #UgandaDecides drew 320,000 tweets over 24 hours. However, there was a decline in the number of tweets shared on Election Day relative to Election eve. To some extent, this can be linked to the social blockage ordered by the communications regulator, which contributed to a drop in the number of people tweeting.

### Top Tweeters

On both analysis periods, bots featured prominently in the top tweeter positions. The bots appeared to retweet and tweet in multiplicity the same content to support President Museveni. His main opponent Besigye also had a few bots. This use of bots by candidates may be a reflection of their recognition of the importance of social media and its growing use by citizens. However, it also indicates politicians extending influence in the online discourse as a means of manipulating public opinion during contested elections. There was a drop in the presence of bots on Election Day – possibly linked to the social media block that was initiated on the day.

Only three media accounts made it in the top ten most active tweeters for both hashtags – these are @GalaxyFMUg and @SMSMediaUganda for the #UgandaDebate16; and @nbstv for #UgandaDecides during the Elections.

Media houses were challenged by ordinary citizens and vocal Ugandan tweeters with large followings who received a great amount of retweets. Nevertheless, some of the top ten tweeters and those with the most retweeted content are journalists who tweeted under their personal accounts.

### Interacting With Whom?

Analysis for both hashtags indicates less interaction amongst tweeps as they opted to retweet other people's content rather than responding directly to tweets or generating their own original content. During the presidential debates 60% of the tweets were retweeted while during the election period 68% of the tweets were retweeted.

The lack of response to tweets directed to presidential aspirants like Museveni, Besigye and Mbabazi, may indicate that these candidates were primarily using Twitter for pushing out election campaign information rather than seeking to engage with their followers or did not have the capacity to respond to the influx of tweets directed at them.

During the analysis of #UgandaDebate16, presidential candidates Museveni, Mabirizi and Kyalya had the highest number of mentions. For the #UgandaDecides, Besigye had the most mentions followed by that of Museveni and Mbabazi. However, on Election Day, Museveni and Besigye accounts received the most @mentions as tweeters retweeted content relating to the arrest of the latter and the shutdown of social media perceived to have been instructed by the former.

While Ugandan citizens with access to the internet and the capacity to maneuver past the VPN took to Twitter to share thoughts on the events leading up to and during the elections, it becomes apparent that Twitter was used primarily as a tool to monitor and share developments than as a tool for conversation among tweeters. This can be seen in the 32% and 40% original twitter posts out of all posts shared during the election period and presidential debate, respectively.

However, it is through twitter that tweeters kept informed of developments – particularly during the elections - but also challenged how and what the media was reporting. Tweeters wary of information being supplied by the Electoral Commission and by the media conducted their own investigations – a popular one being the release of [conflicting voter register](#) information by the Electoral Commission, as uncovered by Evelyn Namara (@enamara) and JavieSsozie (@jssozi).

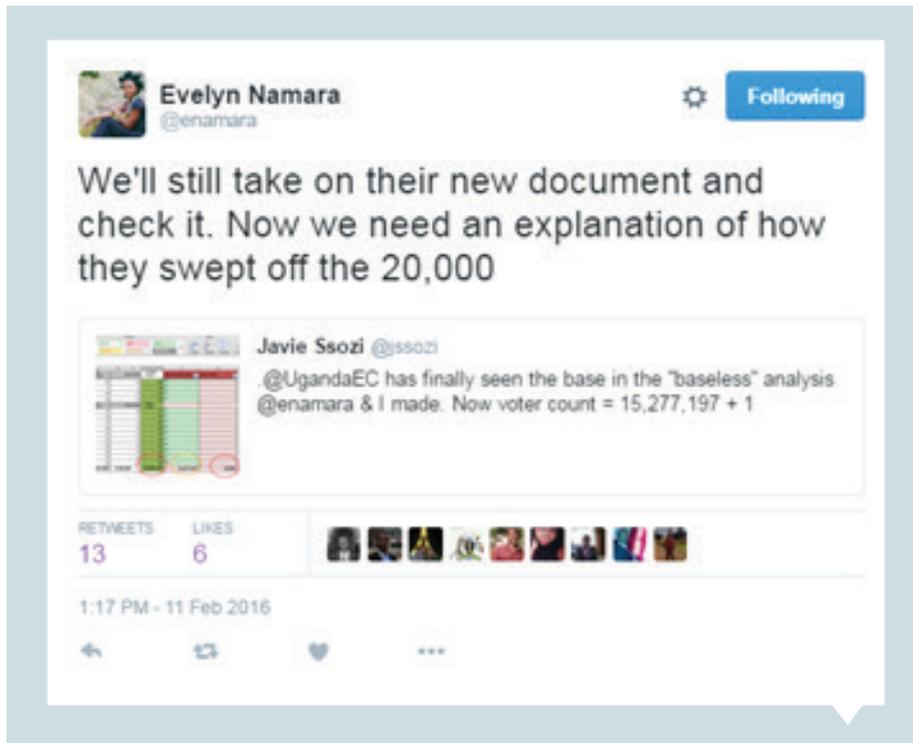


Figure 30: Tweeters @enamara and @jssozi sharing discrepancies in the official voter register

Although the media had a strong presence, tweeters with large followings appear to have become a reference point for developments, often giving competition to mainstream media houses in the amount of retweets that their content gathered and the path that online conversation took. The analysis also revealed the challenge that media faces online in its position of authority as a source and disseminator for information particularly as tweeps turn to other sources - including journalists affiliated with media houses and tweeters with a prominent social media footprint - for information and its verification.



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