



SPECIAL REPORT

Juan Manuel Santos online achievements and challenges of digital identity

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d+i LLORENTE & CUENCA

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1. INTRODUCTION

It was nearly a 100 days from the beginning of his mandate as President of Colombia when Juan Manuel Santos presented his Twitter account officially. The opening of the new communication space @JuanManSantos was announced in a press release issued from the Presidency of the Republic, which even if it already existed, had not been promoted before. In one of the first messages of the Twitter account you could read literally: “The Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez will receive the President Juan Manuel Santos to strengthen bilateral relations”.

This excessively impersonal use of the account showed one of the more frequent tendencies around the microblogging tool when the political leaders started using it several years ago. This happened a lot because during the transition from the traditional web spaces to the social networks, management teams tried to maintain the official tone and the same formal distance which they had always had until then when conveying the messages of the President on the Internet.

And this dilemma has been one of the biggest challenges in management communication of leaders in the social networks. How to maintain the institutionalism which is required by a president without losing the implicit nearness in the social networks? Should they speak with a tone like the one used for an announcement on television or like the one for spontaneous talks with people after a speech given in a public square?

In the case of Juan Manuel Santos, as Internet represents an essential key in his communication strategy, it seems that little by little he has tuned into the codes of this space, and that, finally, social networks have become a solid and efficient way to support the backbone of his official speeches.

“The presence in Twitter and in social networks of the President of Colombia has showed a considerable development”

2. NETWORK INFLUENCE

Taking into account that the steps of the Colombian President and his team in the strengthening of online presence have given interesting results, it is likely that the tendency as a digital *influenciator* will continue to be reinforced. In fact, that same online community already created and used to the frequent digital presence of @JuanManSantos proved its efficiency when it helped to summarize and multiply rapidly in the networks the three axis suggested by Juan Manuel Santos in his recent inauguration speech: Peace, Equity and Education became words in fashion in the Colombian network a few minutes after being announced by the President.

Even with 2,970,000 followers until the days prior to the beginning of his second mandate, Juan Manuel Santos does not stand out in Twitter for being the one with the highest level of influence in the social networks compared to other Latin American presidents.

The methodology of the network influence of LLORENTE & CUENCA shows different metrics, which study the size of the online community, the potential range of mention volume, the links to personal sites, the content produced and shared, the online authority of followers and the positioning in search engines. The influence index of Juan Manuel Santos is 77.3 out of 100. (Figure 1)

However, even without being in the Top of influence among the Chiefs of State of the continent, the presence in Twitter and in social networks of the President of Colombia has showed a considerable development. His digital spaces have been transformed from channels of official messages into channels of participation closer to citizens and with more ability to show the personality of the President.

INFLUENCE INDEX IN THE NETWORKS: 77.3/100

- Online total authority: **82 / 100**
- Relationship ability: **84 / 100**
- Twitter: **@juanmansantos**
- Verified: **Yes**
- Figures at **11/08/2014**
 - » Followers: **2,977,445**
 - » Follows: **1,556**
 - » Tweets sent: **7,110**
 - » Likes: **833,600**
- Appears in: **10,738 lists**
- Account opened since: **11/08/2009**

3. PERSONALITY AND AUTHENTICITY

From the stunning appearance of social networks as a space of opinion and current tendencies in the whole world, one of the conclusions is that the community rewards those who are more authentic in the network; and also those who are able to use

Figure 1

SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TWEETS OF PRESIDENT SANTOS (*)

Speed, potential range and authority are taken into account as factors that influence those who marked RT o FV.

“

Thank you very much to the teacher Pékerman and his technical team, they reminded us how Colombia plays and the importance of dreaming! pic. twitter.com/4LuJYRSzA6”

Retweets: 754 Favourites: 917

PEACE

“

Thank you very much Uruguay, Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador for their determined support to the peace in Colombia pic. twitter.com/ICP7GxBtXh”

Retweets: 464 Favourites: 212

EDUCATION

“

Support of @fencode and educational cooperatives. Education is the most powerful tool to fight against poverty”

Retweets: 439 Favourites: 224

EMPLOYMENT

“

Colombia is the leading country in the creation of employment. We are the Latin American country which created more employment pic. twitter.com/BrPbMEEnNL”

Retweets: 134 Favourites: 43

VIVE DIGITAL PLAN

“

We deliver 16,600 computers, benefit 320 million children of the Atlantic @Ministerio_TIC @DiegoMolanoVega @CompuParaEducar”

Retweets: 121 Favourites: 38

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

“

Today we signed the Pacific Alliance with the presidents @sebastianpina @FelipeCalderon and @Ollanta_HumalaT pic. twitter.com/20g6FBwe”

Retweets: 107 Favourites: 26

HOUSING

“

Today we kept our promise and we fulfilled the dream of a free house for 91 families from the Valle del Cauca Department. pic. twitter.com/gd8xGK4Y”

Retweets: 112 Favourites: 4

their accounts for a different purpose than the institutional or commercial promotion.

The correct projection of personality in the network is very important. In some cases, such as the management of the account of the Pope @Pontifex, it has become even more evident the positive results which, in building a community and engagement, can bring a participation in the social networks in line with the characteristics by which a public personality is recognised.

The @Pontifex account already existed with the former Pope Benedict XVI, but with Pope Francis the number of followers increased by 80%, and not only that, but also the level of interactivity through tweets is the best one in the world, higher than the one of @BarackObama. This is due to the fact that the messages of the Pope promote participation, but specially, they show the real character by which the Pope is known: a close and natural person who interprets the current events and among other things he loves football: “The World Championship succeeded in gathering people from different countries and religions. Sports should always promote the culture of encounter” Tweet issued on the 14th July 2014. 25,300 RT.

In short, the accounts that manage to have more impact in the social networks have as main characters authentic people who express themselves with a believable tone that makes their followers have the impression of having a real

“A well-known politician these days cannot build his reputation without a good online management”

conversation with the person, and not with the managing team. However, this theoretical advantage of social networks can be distorted if the message does not correspond to the usual personality, as could be seen in the first years of digital management of President Santos.

4. DIGITAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE

A well-known politician these days cannot build his reputation without a good online management. The concept “digital identity” is a key point in this sense, and includes all the perceptions which are found on the internet around a person. It is a combination of both the actual contents and mentions from others. In the case of visible persons, this combination is even more evident and clearly

affects the reputation of people the more visible they are for the public opinion.

In that regard, the tag cloud of Juan Manuel Santos on the Internet (Figure 2) is a result of the analysis of the most repeated subjects in the online social media and in the important conversation in the social networks during his first mandate. The terms associated with more visibility and repercussion have been: “reelection”, “peace”, “Uribe”, “diplomatic relations”, “marmalade”, “minister”, “locomotives”, “National Unity”, “Venezuela” and “Chávez”.

It is worth mentioning that even though the concept “prosperity” was one of the most frequently used by the Government at the beginning, it was not reflected later in the digital conversations around the President.

With this exception, the subjects in a best position have coincided in general with the agenda which the Government has wanted to promote in the public agenda. This result reflects a coherent discourse between the traditional and online surrounding, which has become evident in particular in the way in which the public opinion has reacted to the unexpected events, attacks or crisis.

Terms such as “Peace”, “Locomotives” or “National Unity” have occupied a distinguished place in the group of key words in the conversation. Even when there were a large number of messages from the opposition or criticism for



Gráfico 2



“Juan Manuel Santos has managed to reach a position of leadership in the Colombian digital environment”

the management of international relations and internal crisis, these were dealt with from the official accounts of the President more with arguments associated with state politics than direct answers. To a certain extent, there is coherence between the way in which Santos traditionally has dealt with the problems, and what he has reflected in the social networks.

5. EVOLUTION IN THE NETWORKS

The balance of online management suggests that both due to the increase in the number of followers in his digital communities and to the influence that he generates in these, Juan Manuel Santos has managed to reach a position of leadership in the Colombian digital environment; the change in the results from four years ago until now has been supported by a change in his tone of his conversation, in the subject

matter of the messages ad in the potential effect obtained on the Internet.

This evolution in the use of Twitter by the Colombian President has been evident. Since the beginning until now the style of publication of Juan Manuel Santos has progressed from institutional and impersonal interventions “President Juan Manuel Santos will not negotiate with the National Liberation Army until it releases the hostages and gives up the armed fight (November 2010)” to someone who conveys positive thoughts and sentences with a visionary and leadership tone which try to transmit a closer but at the same time inspiring tone. “Faith, Work and Patience”, thanks to @FALCAO for being an example for our young people. Go ahead and safe journey back home!! #ElTigreVuelve (August 2014)”.

One of the reasons why President Santos has managed to changes his strategy in the web is due to the humanization of his interventions in the Internet spaces. The direct mention to people increased considerably in the last period of time and they were usually accompanied by images which captured the moment: “Congratulations to William Peña, champion of the Mathematics Olympics of SENA. Support the challenge of our young people!” July 2014.

On the other hand, as the two main features of his personality as a leader are those of being a good manager and organiser

5 ACHIEVEMENTS	5 CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having changed from a very institutional language to a closer one. • Having made the images of his messages more existential and closer. • Manage more interaction with key persons in the web. • Use social networks to create tendencies on current affairs. • Having been timely in the intervention in those cases where his opinion was expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a more personal interactive web space of strategic thought. • Maintain coherence between what is said and what is done. • Reflect more authenticity in the tweets and the posts broadcasted. • Increase ways of participation and interaction with those they try to communicate with. • Manage to show on the Internet the same communication coordination that he establishes with his cabinet and his working team.

“Social networks exist and are so popular globally because of the closeness they generate and because of the gaps they close between the public personalities and the citizens”

of working teams, it can be said that he has found among the ministers and closest collaborators an excellent community of online validators to reinforce his identity and the amount of his presence in the digital conversation. The improvement in the visibility and interaction of President Santos also has to do with, among other factors, the boost that this network of online support has built over these years of governance.

The mobilisation of the concepts of innovation and networks, and the actual presence of the State on the Internet has without doubt, meant another big boost for the digital identity of the President. This intervention in the web of the programmes of ministers such as @diegomolanovega, @Mauriciocard, @German_Vargas or @luisfelipehenao has brought millions of citizens from different sectors closer to interact with those responsible in the Government through more productive dialogues than the usual ones of complaints, questions and claims. In the same way, the support which from the MinTic as an entity and @Ministerio_TIC as an account that has been given to the technological inclusion in the country and to those users who are more familiar with the digital sphere represents a factor to consider.

6. CHALLENGES

Even if the communication of an institutional leader like the President has to keep the corresponding institutional character, rigour and security,

social networks exist and are so popular globally because of the closeness they generate and because of the gaps they close between the public personalities and the citizens. In the case of the governors and their subjects this premise has even more value, given that from a conceptual point of view the first group have a duty towards the second group, and if it is a question of horizontal participation in spaces, very few more evident examples exist until now than the social networks.

The risks of management and reputation which imply having an open and direct conversation with all citizens are obvious, but some Latin American president such as Cristina Fernández @CFKArgentina, Djilma Rouseff @delmabr, Enrique Peña Nieto @EPN or Rafael Correa @MachiRafael have achieved a bigger influence in the conversation on the Internet thanks to the development of new spaces of interaction in which other leaders have avoided.

Along these lines a very interesting new opportunity for online management can be seen for Juan Manuel Santos to increase his engagement rates on the Internet. Given the constant references that he makes to his convictions and strategic lines of thought in his online messages, there could be a more profound space for reflexion in the form of a blog. To be able to have a theoretical and shared thought backup is usually for some leaders a vehicle of building relation and strategic support to line up the

“The continuous construction of digital identity, as well as the improvement of his influence and online relationship should be priorities in the management of reputational capital for the President Santos”

actions in Twitter and Facebook and achieve a comprehensive management in the positioning of key messages.

In short, the management of the Digital Identity of Juan Manuel Santos should always guarantee a correct alienation between his usual tone, his personality, his management style and what he communicates in the digital spaces. However, he needs a management structure which in addition to encouraging the intervention of the citizens makes them feel participants of what it is communicated. If not, they would be using a participative channel only for broadcasting goals. At this stage it will be very important how he manages to continue conveying to the digital spaces his well-known abilities as a good team manager, given the opportunity to his collaborators to participate and communicating appropriately the leadership and shared responsibility of all his government in the achievement of his aims.

Santos has to face up to many programmatic challenges in this new period and the social networks will definitely be a trust worthy thermometer to determine how he will face up to these challenges and to what extent this effort will

be approved. According to the conversation tendencies detected in the networks, the expectations of President Juan Manuel Santos for his second mandate are focused on: to conclude successfully the peace process, maintain the rhythm of the economy, manage the challenges and questions regarding investment and employment in mining and infrastructures, and improve the conditions of education and inequality which leave the country in a bad position in the international rankings.

On the other hand, an important management team that has emerged and will continue to do so in the network is the dialogue that he will be able to establish with the opposition. His ability to answer the foreseeable contradictory tendencies of the opposition and the efficient management that he makes of his presence and conversation on the Internet, will depend on part of the favourable climate that he could have to manage the achievement of his main goals. The continuous construction of digital identity, as well as the improvement of his influence and online relationship should be priorities in the management of reputational capital for the President Santos in the next four years.

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