Second Presidential Debate
October 09, 2016
Social Media Highlights

Main Takeaways

● *Social Media Traffic*: Compared to the first Presidential debate on September 26, there were 2 million more social media posts related to tonight's Presidential debate. These included 11 million mentions of Trump, a 66% increase from the first debate, and 4.3 million mentions of Clinton, a 61% increase from the first debate.

● *No Handshake*: Social media overwhelmingly disapproved of the lack of a handshake between the candidates at the debate kickoff by posting a 69% negative sentiment.

● *Trump Tape*: The debate kicked off with a discussion on Trump's recent video scandal and social media responded with more than 180,000 posts containing the term "Locker Room."

● *Debate Issues*: Posts related to Russia dominated social media platforms with 3.3 million mentions, with a 74% negative sentiment, compared to Energy (34,000 posts) and Health Care (32,000 posts).

●*Most Negative Issue*: At 82% negative, posts related to Refugees garnered the most negative sentiments online.

● *Foreign Policy*: With topics ranging from Russia to Iraq to Syria, Trump's sentiment among social media commenters were 64% negative, while Clinton's mentions rated at an even 50-50 split between negative and positive sentiment.

● *Body Language*: More than 100,000 tweets focused on the candidates' body language, using terms such as "pacing," "sitting," "standing," and "scowling."

Clinton: Pre-Debate

72.9%   27.1%

Clinton: Post-Debate

60.6%   39.4%

Increasingly Positive

Although media reports immediately following the debate called it the "ugliest debate in American history" (*Politico*) and criticized its "almost unremitting hostility" (*The New York Times*), sentiments shared about both candidates became more positive throughout the debate. Clinton's mentions were 12 percentage points more positive at the end of debate compared to its beginning, and Trump's mentions became more positive by 10 percentage points.
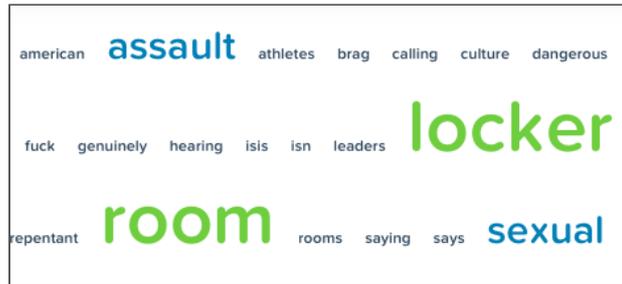
Trump: Post-Debate

75.9%   24.1%

65.6%   34.4%

Debate Night Word Clouds

Debate Terms: Word cloud showing social media terms related to popular debate issues over the course of the debate.

9:30 pm ET: Top trending terms related to the debate's tone and atmosphere revolved around the video released by *The Washington Post* over the weekend featuring the Republican candidate's comments from 2005, which Trump apologized for during the debate.

Foreign Policy

Clinton
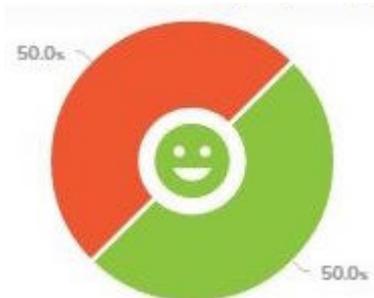
Clinton's mentions on social media regarding Foreign Policy were 15 percentage points more positive than those of Trump.

Trump

The Political Social Media Research Group at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, provides quantitative analysis of the US presidential and VP debates and Election Day on social media platforms through the use of mass aggregate technology. PSMRG's research director is Professor Stuart N.Brotman, Howard Distinguished Endowed Professor of Media Management and Law and Beaman Professor of Communication and Information. Its members are Sarah Bass, Eddie Bryant, Joshua, Cunningham, Jamie Greig, Beth Hurst, Zachary Knott, Calyn Meade, Stephanie Rieselman, Tara Thomas and Brianna Williams.

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