

# Politics and New Platforms: From #Polis2015

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**LSE MSc student Sakshi Dayal on the 'New Tools & Platforms: Twitter & Guardian' session from the Polis 2015 Conference, 27 March 2015.**

**Speakers: Ramaa Sharma (chair), Joanna Geary, Alberto Nardelli**

New media has made its way into the very core of our daily lives. It is a forum that allows us to participate in discussions, voice our opinions, and most importantly, a source through which we acquire most of the information that enables us to form these opinions.

At the Polis journalism conference held on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, Joanna Geary, Head of News Twitter UK, stated that Twitter's potential to influence opinion would be especially important in the upcoming UK General Election.

Joanna cited the latest statistic that reveals Twitter has over 15 million active users in the UK, a large number of who are below the age of 34 and have grown up with social media in their lives. In the 18-34 age group, especially, people are greatly influenced by the information they come across on social media. Members of this age group are more undecided on who they want to vote for, and so the information they receive through Twitter can impact the direction of their loyalties.

The capacity of Twitter to transfer information and influence opinions has increased, especially in the last year, with the rise in the number of products associated with it that can be used as reporting tools, and these, Geary believes, will have an important role to play during the general election.

Alberto Nardelli, Data Editor at the Guardian also agreed with the view that people have access to more information than ever before, but he made the crucial point that not all information or data is knowledge.

Speaking largely in the context of journalism, he said data is important because it furnished new dimensions to stories and ensures originality but, today, it is essential to move beyond data journalism and focus instead on stories that are underpinned by numbers but are still primarily stories. For example, projection of polls in the context of the upcoming election is important but most people are uninterested in polls, so the challenge lies in creating this interest, implying the focus should be on how data can be weaved into the story while allowing the latter to retain its audience appeal.

Data, Nardelli believes, is important, but it is more essential to focus on the story, its insight, and the most compelling format in which it can be told.

So while the extent of influence of information circulated through tools like Twitter depends on its format and content, it is undeniable that these new platforms along with the tools attached to them, will play an important role in the upcoming UK general elections and its final outcome.

Listen here to audio of the session:



## **New tools and platforms: Twitter & The Guardian**

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