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Online Democracy: A Content Analysis of Facebook Pages of 2016 Philippine Presidential Candidates

Jayson Troy Bajar*

Central Philippine University, Half Moon Dr Lopez, Iloilo City, 5000 Iloilo, Philippines

Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the extent of utilization by which Filipino politicians use social media to further a political agenda. A combination of quantitative (conceptual) and qualitative (relational) content analysis were used to examine the Facebook posts of five presidential candidates retrieved in a month period prior to May 2016 elections. Results showed that, 'text and photo' is the most dominant medium used by politicians. This study suggests that the manner by which content is presented bears significance in the likelihood of audience to interact in the post. The same inference is consistent with the average word count. Results showed that, as politicians use more words in their posts, it is likely that they will have lesser interactions. In the frequency of updates, it was observed that most of the politicians increased posting updates as the election was nearing. This led to the assumption that the virtual presence of politicians is both beneficial to them and the supporters. The former contributes to the popularity of the politician while the latter contributes in the dissemination of political information. In the degree of interaction, results showed that as politicians load more content, the lesser interactions they will get. For the most dominant theme used, it turned out those political advertisements ranked highest, comprising a third of all posts, accompanied by posts on self-descriptions. Consistent with other studies, results showed that even in social media, Filipino politicians are more inclined to promote themselves as 'persons' and 'candidates' rather than as leaders with platforms and convictions. Lastly, it was observed that politicians generally project information beneficial to them and hence tend to avoid those that may be considered their weak points. This finding illustrates that the social media empowers politicians to set the public agenda. Fundamentally, the findings showed that, the extent of utilization does not necessarily guarantee the politician's political success.

Introduction

The end of the 20th Century marked the beginning of an entirely new era that succumb the world to unprecedented and rapid evolution. This phenomena is widely attributed to the birth of the internet which plagued the world with present cyber-technologies. Thus, this is may be why this era is popularly called the 'information or the digital age' of the histories [1]. Subsequent to the commonality of the internet is the normalization of virtuality through virtual communication, virtual communities such as those from social networking sites and of virtual social peers [2]. Even most people nowadays redirected their personalities to virtual counterparts. This trend eventually led to the evolution as well of political communication [3] Particularly, the Internet led to the modification of traditional relationships and processes of communications of (a) governments, (b) politicians, and (c) the people. In the case of governments, the internet is used not just as communication linkages but also to help the government in service provision [4]. In addition, the internet is also used to employ different political strategies, for instance, to fuel contemporary political controversies [5].

Erstwhile, in the aspect of politicians, the internet continues to transform the political arena as well as the organization of political parties. The emergence of the Internet also signified the inception of another battleground where politicians compete for voters. Lastly, in the perspective of the masses, the Internet empowered the common people to channel their concerns to the country's leaders in the most convenient and least expensive means. The overwhelming presence of politicians in social networks makes it easier for them to transpire their sentiments as well as establish support system with their fellow political supporters [3].

In the Philippines, the internet is becoming a daily part in the lives of Filipinos. In fact, the country is accorded three word titles to refer to the magnitude of internet utilization in the country. In 2013, the country was named as the Social Networking Capital of the World (www.manilastandardtoday.com). In the following year, the country was given another title as the Social Media Capital of the World (www.sg.news.yahoo.com). Also in 2014, Makati, the business capital of the country, is named as the Selfie Capital of the World [6].

Meanwhile, a more detailed report is provided by Global Web Index [7] which revealed that there are 44.22 Million active internet users in a country. According to the said report, from the 44 Million active internet users, there are 42 Million active social media users by which 36 Million of them access through mobile phones. The report further indicated that the most popularly used application is Facebook scoring 21% followed far behind by Google Plus with a score of 13% [7]. In its 2015 3rd Quarter Report, Global Web Index reported that Filipinos are the most prolific internet users in the world. They found out that Filipinos spend more than 3.5 h daily as compared to the international average of only 1.77 h per day.

With the overwhelming presence of Filipinos in the internet and

*Corresponding author: Bajar JT, Central Philippine University, Half Moon Dr Lopez, Iloilo City, 5000 Iloilo, Philippines, Tel: 09176209322; E-mail: jaysontroy46@gmail.com

of course in the social media, it has become a significant aspect in the politics of the country. As witnessed during the recent May 2016 elections, social media was extensively used by politicians to report their activities whether directly linked to be political or those activities they intend to politicize. They used the social media to air their opinions on pressing national and international issues, publicize their advocacy and electoral platforms and at some point, allow the people to see their daily activities aside from being a public figure and even to communicate with them directly.

As an extension of the public domain, the social media also serve as a platform where people communicate to each other and exchange opinions. Hence, politicians see this as an opportunity where they stimulate public conversations which may as well contribute to their popularity. With this, it is worthy to point out that the order of presidential candidates that are most talked about on Facebook from November 20, 2015 to April 20, 2016 (www.cnnphilippines.com), reflected their actual rankings in the polls. Of course, President Duterte lead the list owning 68% of total discussions, followed by Mar Roxas with 46% which is just close with Grace Poe at 42% (a nostalgic difference) then by Jejomar Binay at 27% and last on the list by Santiago at 19%. In an attempt to explore and expand a thorough understanding of the political purposes of the internet and social media, this study embarked on an academic journey to know the extent of utilization by which politicians use them to further their political agenda.

Objectives of the study

This study seeks to examine the extent by which our politicians make use of social media to further political agenda.

Specifically, this study aims to:

1) Determine the most dominant medium used to present information in the Facebook pages of politicians;

2) Determine the average word count in the Facebook posts of politicians;

3) Determine the frequency of updates by counting the number of posts in daily and weekly basis;

4) Determine the degree of interaction by totaling reactions, comments, and shares; and

5) Identify the theme of each of the Facebook post to determine the most dominant kind of information that politicians are most likely to propagate in Facebook.

Theoretical frame work

To in help the understanding of phenomena being studied, this research is anchored on two communication theories: uses and gratifications theory and agenda setting theory.

The first theory used by this study is uses and gratifications theory. By the using this theory, the researcher will be able to explain the participation of audiences in the interactions to the Facebook page of politicians.

Uses and gratifications theory evolved from the shift of focus in the media content to the audience. Instead of considering the audience as passive actors vulnerable to strong media messages, this theory argues that audiences are consciously selective of the media content that could satisfy their various needs.

This theory is associated with the works of Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler

and Michael Gurevitch (1974; cited in ref. [8]). In the assumption of the theory, users are goal oriented in their media use (www.uky.edu). It furthermore supports the idea that user seeks out a media source that best fulfils the needs of the user. Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso 2008; cited in ref. [8] further added that it is concerned with what people do with media instead of what media do to people.

Adeyanju and Haruna (2011; cited in ref [8]) note that the main thrust of the theory is that audience members have certain needs which make them be selectively exposed to, attend to, and retain media messages because of the perceived gratifications derivable from such messages. The second theory by which this study is anchored is the agenda setting theory. Agenda setting is the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about [9]. Journalist Walter Lippmann first observed this function in the 1920s. Lippmann pointed out that media dominates over the creation of pictures in our head. He believed that the public reacts not to actual events but to the pictures in our head. Therefore the agenda setting process is used to remodel all the events occurring in our environment, into a simpler model before we deal with it [9]. McCombs et al. [10] have then followed this concept arguing that: "This impact of the mass media - the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking - has been labelled the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Here may lie the most important effect of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about." Applying these theories to this study, in the uses and gratifications theory, users of social media are assumed to be intentional seekers of political information and messages. They are able to select and use the technology in ways that suit their purpose. Thus, they participate in the communication as active audience and not passive.

Meanwhile, in agenda setting theory, the media is now rivalled by actual sources of information and therefore influence what public agenda to talk about. These actual sources of information include our politicians who can now penetrate the world of media and the production of news and information. The ability of the traditional media to set public agenda is today restricted to the keener perusal of the netizens.

Definition of terms

To facilitate the understanding of the study, important terms used in the study are herein operationally defined:

Degree of Interaction - as defined by Facebook, degree of engagement or interaction is the consolidated total number of likes, comments and shares (www.facebook.com). In this study, the same method was adopted to measure the degree of interaction. Extent of Utilization refers to which a given group uses particular service for a specified purpose. In this study, it refers to the manner by which Facebook is used by politicians for the furtherance of a political agenda.

Frequency of Posting refers to the number of postings made for a specific period of time. In this study, it is operationally defined as the number of times the presidential candidates are posting in monthly, weekly, and daily basis.

Medium of Presenting Information is the means by which information is presented for a particular audience. In this study, it refers to the manner by which politicians present information in their Facebook pages which may be through: text, photo, video, live video, links or their combinations Political Agenda is when a certain group

or individual is interested in furthering a cause which is politically motivated. In this study, the political agenda is the election of a politician to the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Politicians refer to people who seek to be elected to a political position. In this study, it refers to the five presidential candidates for president last May 2016, namely: Jejomar Binay, Miriam Defensor -Santiago, Rodrigo Duterte, Grace Poe and Mar Roxas. In the succeeding pages of this paper, they are presented in the same order which is also the chronology adopted by COMELEC.

Social Media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. In this study this refers alternately to Facebook and/or social networking sites.

Themes are the subjects of artistic representations. In this study, it refers to the quality of a post as classified whether it can be classified to personal life, electoral campaigns and political advertisements, self-descriptions, experience in government service, advocacies and electoral platforms, quasi-official functions, public announcements, political positions and/or entertainment. Word Count - is the number of words in a particular unit. In this study, it refers to the number of words in the post.

Significance of the study

Generally, this study is significant for politicians and their political parties, the academic community and the community especially of local researchers. Primarily, this study is significant to politicians and their political parties for it will provide them varied perspectives as to the extent of utilization of social media for political purposes and possibly how they can use the findings of this study to improve their social media campaign. In this study, it is emphasized that campaigning in social media is another domain of political and electoral contestation. The great importance of the internet and social networking sites is spotlighted in this study to help politicians acknowledge their significance in contemporary political life. It highlights the fact that the internet as a vital tool in this century's politics has the capacity to challenge their tenure and may be depose them from their offices or to worst case scenarios damage the entirety of their political career. This study will impart to them a glimpse of how politics is played in the world of virtual devices and its dynamism as a virtual political battleground.

Secondly, this study is significant to the academic community. This study is particularly relevant to student and faculty of politics and communications. It will give them insights about the virtual behaviour of both politicians and their virtual supporters. It can serve as a reference to discussions related to Facebook studies which are already the trend in the other half of the world. Also, it can serve as an inspiration for further academic explorations that will enrich local literature and improve collaborations in the fields of politics and communications.

Lastly, this study is nevertheless significant to the local research community. This study may also serve as an inspiration to conduct later studies that will enrich and improve local literature of the same subject. Also, this study will serve as an eye-opener for local researchers to explore the validation, or replication for that purpose, the studies conducted by their foreign counterparts. Remarkably noting the social media statistics of the country, further studies related to this will be very beneficial to the shifting, if not advancing, political culture of the Philippines.

Scope and limitations of the study

This study examined the Facebook posts of the politicians from April 7 to May 7 only. The period by which the data was collected was one month prior to elections. All in all, this study manually examined 604 Facebook posts of politicians.

The first limitation encountered by this study is the non-inclusion of the data from different Facebook pages and/or groups also managed by the social media team of the different candidates. This study only gathered data from the official Facebook pages of the politicians.

Another limitation encountered by this study is the availability of related literature in the local parlance. The researcher only found one local study that bears a resemblance of the subject. Because of this, the researcher used foreign studies to support the findings of this study. Lastly, a limitation on the application of relevant statistical measurements was encountered by this study. Hence the researcher only relied on nominal and ordinal measures. Related studies showed the possibility of employing higher and complex tools of measurements however on different data sets. Such were not deemed fit to the data under present investigation hence the simple measurements

Review of Related Literature

There are numerous studies published already in well-known journals around the world that affirmed the scholarly importance of Facebook in the field of research. Sociologists explore to the idea that Facebook can provide avenues to organize social movements. Political scientists, on the other hand, excavate the notion that social media serve remedy to the apathy of the youth in politics. Even psychologists, too, hypothesize to the ways by which social media may become a forum for socialization or might just be another room for social exploitation or what they coined as 'cyber-bullying.'

Facebook studies encompass voluminous corpus of related researches that aimed at obtaining and expanding deeper understanding of the platform across different fields of human endeavour. It is essential to note that Facebook continues to be phenomenal which now extends its reach to different age groups. These studies investigate the significance of Facebook to different human activities and provide insights on how Facebook is affecting our lives. An example of this study is by Somasundram [11] who examined Facebook pages of university libraries in Asia Pacific region to know how they managed such pages to interact with their possible stakeholders. The study analyzed the popularity of these pages which accounts for 9.4% of their total user population which they obtained by dividing total number of page likes by the actual university population. The study commenced in August 2011 that ended by November at the same year. Through content analysis, they determined the possible themes of the posts and assign them to certain categories they identified. The results showed that, 39% of the posts serve promotional purposes followed by 14% interest, 13% announcement, 8% news, 3% activities, 2% enquiries, and 2% feedback. The study further computed for the engagement rate which they obtained by dividing the consolidated number of likes and comments by the total number of post in particular page. The study ended by concluding that interactions to posts are derived from the manner by which they are posted and not the number of posts by the owners of the page.

Facebook can also have importance even to health care. One study, meanwhile from the US, examined how Facebook presence of a medical facility, particularly M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, contributed as support system, in their case cancer patients. Hillard [12], the sole author of the study, analyze the most prominent constituents of M.D. Anderson Facebook group and ascertained how a top a cancer centre

employs social media tactics to better serve its patients. She used content analysis from a series of data gathered in 15 day period to obtain the engagement rate in the page and to identify the content type and the type of posters and their demographic factors which include gender, age range, and location.

The results of the study showed that from the data gathering period alone, there has been an increase of 230 page fans although no inherent pattern was observed. The number of posts made per day ranged from one to five posts with activities detected early in the week and the least seen on weekends. In terms of main posts statistics, the results show that the most dominant content type used are links comprising 38% of the total number of posts followed by news for 20%, pictures for 12%, video for 10%, anecdotes and questions each at 6%, and feedback and advertisements which constitute 4% each.

The study concluded that the platform can provide a positive community for patients, families, and doctors alike. It was also found out that most of the posts come from middle aged people who typically suffer cancer. Also, they discovered that majority of the posters are women which they partially associate to the emotional predisposition for emotional connectivity of women. Lastly, she noted that tele-medicine in social media specifically Facebook, is becoming more accessible which can even reach up to the remote areas, a factor beneficial for the patients who may 'live without direct contact with a major cancer center.' The study recommended increasing the sample size of further similar studies later on. This, the author argues, will strengthen the claims and assumptions given the solid information from large sample. A side from above mentioned, Facebook studies also now involve investigation of Facebook content as used for brand promotion. Dolan, Conduit, Fahy and Goodman, for instance, studied how Australian wine brands use Facebook pages to reach possible customers. The authors gathered engagement rate data of 12 Australian wine brands over a 12 month period using Facebook Insights. Upon examination 2,236 overall posts, findings show that there is a low engagement accounting only for an average of 730 people per post in a one year span, a relatively low figure as compared from other product promotion in Facebook. Moreover, the study further revealed that photos have the highest average engagement rates. They also noted that, wine brands post more frequently during Thursdays and rarely on Saturdays oftentimes between 4 pm and 9 pm. As per engagement ratings on the other hand, engagements occur more often on Fridays and Wednesdays. The study ended the discussion by reiterating that the findings of the study will help wine brands to strategically design and deliver content in order to facilitate increased engagement among others. There are also studies that use Facebook content to explore the different motives of people in engaging to this new media. An example of these studies is the study by Batabyal, Banerjee, and Bandyopadhay [13] from India entitled "Extracting useful information from Facebook posts: A Cognitive - Linguistic Analysis." The study analyzed the posts in social networking sites and examined whether contents in social media serve only "phatic" (small talk) element for the purpose of maintaining and defining social relationships as argued by Miller (2008) cited in ref. [13]. Basically, the researchers would like to assess if in fact, conversations in social networking sites are information-driven or just a factor to 'say something in order to stay connected.' In formulating their coding units, the researcher's preliminary asked five active Facebook users to identify the categories of Facebook posts on their newsfeed. Based on the judgment of the five participants, the categories are identified as: 1) generic posts, image and video; 2) personal image; 3) experience sharing; 4) advertisement; 5) check in; 6) any other; 7) and post by Facebook group or media. After asking the respondents to classify

the posts, the researchers also provided questionnaires to get insights about the function of these posts in their lives.

In the actual data collection, ten active Facebook users at age range of 20-32 years were asked to participate in the study. Accordingly, the participants were asked to rate the posts against the set of question in a scale of 1 to 10, which they codified: 1 to 3 as LOW, 4 to 6 as MEDIUM, and 7 to 10 as HIGH. In their measurement, they considered ratings from 6 to 10 as non-pathic.

In the findings of the study, they found out that there are many "low" information contents termed as pathic communications. However, the researchers also revealed that there is also large number of information-rich generic posts, including both personal experience and general advertisements and posts generated by favourite groups /brands. The researchers concluded that major aspects such as the context and the perspective of the recipient shall be considered when considering a conversation 'pathic' or not. They suggested that, a post may not be pathic if researchers can derive a presupposition from it. Yet they also recognize that such measure of determining or extracting that 'presupposition' is not yet at hand and recommends it to further studies which can be very much of help for those who use social media for commercial uses.

In the other aspect of Facebook studies, erstwhile, the uses of Facebook for political purposes remains yet a broad field for intellectual exploration. Although most of the scholars around the world are in consensus to agree that Facebook is in fact an emerging political tool for politicians, there are yet disagreements as to what are the possible effects and concrete impacts of Facebook to political mobilization which in most cases attributed to its use to attract the electorates to vote in the polls.

An extreme example of this political mobilization carried through social media is the phenomena studied by Okoro and Nwafor [8] in 2011 Nigeria elections. During the said elections, it was attributed that Facebook greatly contributed to the campaigns of politicians. Topics about election became prominent as well as hate speeches, the spread of false rumours and gossip which made social media as battlegrounds for quarrelling supporters. More so, social media became the stirring rod that inflamed the emotions of some of the extremist supporters leading to real life bloodshed and killings. The election was known as the "bloodiest" and the most devastating elections in their history. It was recorded that 800 people were killed, 65,000 others displaced and over 350 churches burnt or destroyed in the violence that precipitated the announcement of the results. According to Adyeanju and Haruna (2011; cited in ref. [8]) social media played the huge role in instigating and fuelling the violence that devoured the people of the poor country. As to whether this is just an exaggerated account of attribution, we do not know it yet. What is clear for now however that is, Facebook was indeed used to communicate and there was a high intensity of usage during the said period.

We cannot exactly gauge what it is really there that Facebook can offer us in the highest sense. There are still gaps with how our activities in the virtual world could be transformed into a real life action. Hence, Facebook studies continue to embark into an academic journey where they try to address the different facets for its deeper understanding.

The study of Goodnow [14], for example, tried to examine through comparative analysis, the Facebook timeline photos of Obama and Romney to determine how photographs can help create an identifiable image for candidates and how these photos may convey to potential viewers. The researcher collected photos from the end of their

individual conventions (August 31 for Romney and September 8 for Obama) up to the last day of election in November 26, 2012. These photos were then sorted to only include photos which depict the candidate excluding those info graphics or photos that contains plain text arguments. For Obama, the researcher examined 115 while 306 from Romney.

Identified by the use of three stances that visual frames offer in the book of Graber and Bucy (2009; cited in ref. [14], the researcher classified the photos whether they are depicted as belonging to the frames of: a) the ideal candidate, b) the populist campaigner or c) the sure loser.

The study was anchored to the social semiotic theory of Kress and van Leewen's which has three meta-functions: a) the ideational, b) the interpersonal, and c) the textual. These three meta-functions operate to construct meaning in the world. For example, the interpersonal meta-function considers relationships between actors in the image, between the image and producer and the image and the audience. In this sense, social semiotic analysis can help reveal how images within Grabe and Bucy's schema work to create meanings associated with the frames. After obtaining the results, the findings of the study found out that, since Obama has been in office for already four years, the public already have a clear picture of him as compared for Romney who had to project more details of him in those photographs. Hence, Romney had to post more images than Obama to project the different faces of his character. In liue of presumed credibility of Obama, Romney had to borrow the credibility in other images by associating himself with patriotic images and revered veterans. For Obama, credibility was shown in the symbols of his credibility such as the Oval Office of the President and the White House walls.

The study concluded that photographs have the potential to convey meanings about the candidate and what they hope to bring to American Politics. Another study worthy of mention is the study of Androniciuc [15] to how Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, used Facebook for online campaign during 2014 elections. The study was conducted mainly to identify and describe the (1) main patterns and central topics of Iohannis' online speech, (2) the element of rhetoric in those speeches, (3) his objectives and the (4) participation in his digital speech.

The researcher conducted content analysis of the Facebook posts of Iohannis totaling to 77 posts which were gathered two weeks prior to the Election Day. The researcher then identified 10 categories by which each posts can be coded.

In assessing the objective of the digital speeches, the researcher included four categories: 1) endorsing political platform, 2) collective appeal, 3) attacking the opponent and 4) call to action. These categories were adopted from the study of Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015; cited in Androniciuc, 2016). In rhetoric element meanwhile, the researcher borrowed the Aristotolean element of rhetoric, an application adopted from the analysis of Obama's 2012 online speech by Martin (2013; cited in ref. [15], namely; 1) logos which are posts that appeal to the rationality; 2) pathos which are posts that appeal to emotions; and 3) ethos which attacks the credibility. Lastly, in assessing participation, the researcher borrowed the participation ladder by Macintosh which included three categories which are: 1) e-enabling (the first stage of participation which refers to the quality of the posts to allow possible interaction and share information to other users); 2) e-engagement (the second stage which refers to the quality of the posts that solicit responses and feedback); and 3) e-empowering (the last stage which

refers to the quality of the post to mobilize audience by collaborating with them through instructions or request for instance to share the message or find new supporters.).

The results in the study showed that, collective appeal is the dominant objective while endorsing political platforms comprise the lowest. In the aspect of rhetoric, pathos or the appeal on the emotions is more frequently used while logos, appeal to rationality, is the least one used. Lastly, in assessing participation, e-enabling tops the list with no items included in the 2nd stage or in the e-engagement while a few in e-empowerments. The researcher explained that this is because of Iohannis digital strategy. The researcher remarked that although he encourages interaction, the speech is well controlled which can be seen in how the posts are crafted to be close ended that its tone no longer requires feedback from the readers. The illusion of interaction comes from the rhetoric which gives the aspect of two-way communication. Empowering then is only partial and the cooperation between candidate and the audience is not authentic. In the researcher's conclusion, she compared very well how Iohannis was using the same campaign communication strategy in social media with Barrack Obama election in 2012. She noted that the online speeches of the Romanian President, like Obama, discretely managed by setting the public agenda and that users were guided towards certain topics for discussion. In the closing remarks of the study, the researcher acknowledged the relatively small sample size used in the study and further recommended to include larger data later on for better and more reliable results.

On the other while, in terms of locating related local studies, the researcher found only one study that can be considered of nearest resemblance to this one. The said study was found from the collection of theses at the Department of Languages, Mass Communications, and Humanities (DLMCH).

The said study was authored by Aurelio [16] who conducted content analysis to Facebook wall posts of 3rd year Mass Communication students? The objectives of her study were: 1) to identify the general classifications of the posts; 2) to identify the dominant theme they are using; and lastly 3) to assess their familiarity of the users to use available applications and features of the program.

In identifying the dominant theme used by the subjects of the study, she prepared coding units by which the classification relies. The classifications include personal messages, photographs, quotations, stories and the likes. In her findings, she discovered that her research subjects most often posted personal messages than other items. She also concluded that subjects demonstrated high familiarity in using Facebook applications.

In this chapter, the researcher was able to present facts and figures supporting the pervasiveness of social media utilization at national and international perspectives. The researcher was also able to present political and non-political literature that suits the needs to lay foundation of this research.

One of the major findings of this review is that; albeit, Facebook has been an emerging and proliferating research topic worldwide, to the awareness of the researcher, he is uncertain whether Filipino researchers already explored researches that attempted to address how Facebook is affecting politics and vice versa. Nonetheless, the researcher is way more certain to the phenomenal trend of Facebook studies linked to politics which is the academic trend in Western world but underscored in the Philippines. If there are in fact Facebook researches in the country, the researcher is also certain that those

studies are also limited in number. Hence, this study will be conducted to contribute to the body of studies that bear resemblance of the subject and of course for local literature. Another finding is that, the conduct of this study is expected to bear competitive and significant value as demonstrated in the current political climate of the country which very much employs social media tools. As our political culture is being re-evaluated because of the dramatic entourage of internet, social media and social networking sites, we remain yet to settle in the basic fact that we might commonly agree: these are not negligible and it is affecting our daily lives. By just looking at the ballooning number of Filipinos, which now reach a near half of hundred million in Facebook, it is not a matter supposed to be taken futile or trivial. The eventual propagation of knowledge in relation to the deeper understanding of this platform is relatively tantamount to also understanding a portion of our dynamic political culture. Thus, the conduct of this study.

Methodology

This study is a content analysis on the extent of utilization of social media to further political agenda. In general, content analysis is 'a technique for systematically describing written, spoken or visual communication (www.psc.dss.ucdavis.edu). Content analysis can be further dichotomized into quantitative and qualitative content analysis [17]. Quantitative content analysis, also called as conceptual analysis, is a content analysis that purely focuses on 'counting of frequency of exact and accurate words, sentences, or statements in the documents being studied.' Qualitative or relational analysis, meanwhile, concentrate on the frequency of attribution of themes. In this study a mixture of these methods was used by the researcher.

The research population

This study examined the Facebook pages of the five candidates for President last May 2016 elections. The order of presenting them here is by alphabetical order adopted from COMELEC, i.e., Binay, Defensor-Santiago, Duterte, Poe, and Roxas.

Coding units

Coding units refer to the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis. They are messages that have been unitized before they can be coded. Coding units can be recording units or context units [17].

Recording units are specific segment of content in which the occurrence of reference is counted or the unit that can be broken down so that reference can be placed in different categories. It can be a symbol (e.g., democracy), theme (e.g. beliefs and values), and character (e.g., fiction or film), sentence/paragraph (e.g., newspapers) or item (e.g., entire book). The recording units used by this study were themes.

Context units are the largest body of content that may be searched to characterize a recording unit. It can be sentences, paragraphs, or articles. In this study, the context units shall be the each of the Facebook posts.

System of enumeration

System of enumeration refers to the method by which units are counted or quantified. It is performed by using three methods of enumeration: space and time, frequency and intensity and direction [18].

Measurement of space can be obtained for instance in the number of column inches while time on the minutes devoted to a news item in television. On the other hand, frequency is measured by obtaining the number of times a given unit or theme recurs in a body of text.

Lastly, intensity and direction are measured by determining the symbolic meaning contained in the message. For instance, measuring the degree of favourability, unfavourability or neutrality of editorials in selected newspapers [18]. The methods of measurement as it will be employed in this study are measured through the following: Space and Time. Since internet allowed for user generated content wherein users may freely choose on the longevity or brevity in presentation of the content, space was measured by obtaining the data on the number of posts in the Facebook page of research subjects. While time, on the other hand, was measured by knowing the average number of words in their Facebook posts.

a)   Frequency: The researcher measured it by determining the most dominant medium used by politicians in presenting information. It was also measured by determining the most dominant theme most likely to be propagated by politicians in their Facebook pages.

b)   Intensity and Direction: It was measured by determining the degree of interaction in the Facebook pages of politicians.

Summary of themes

One of the objectives of this study is to determine the most dominant theme most likely to be propagated by politicians in their Facebook posts. According to Braun and Clarke themes capture something important about the data in relation to the research question and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.

In this study, themes were identified by pre-visit in the pages of politicians to determine the kinds of information they are posting. The researcher was able to identify the following themes and their corresponding criteria (Table 1).

Validity testing

In the book of Holsti [17], he cited that the American Psychological Association Committee on Psychological Tests distinguished validity as it is employed in content analysis. These may be through: content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity, and construct validity.

In this study, content validity was used. According to the same book, content validity is 'established by informed judgment of the investigator.' Holsti [17] added certain question that may help the researcher assess the validity of the study. These questions are:

1)   Are the results plausible?

2)   Will the results be consistent with other information about the phenomena being studied?

3)   Were the categories adequate for the purposes of the study?

4)   Was the coding reliable??

To help the researcher, the research adviser was asked to give his comments regarding the feasibility of the study and answer the rest of the questions above. The researcher took the suggestions and incorporated them in whichever part they are recommended.

Coding sheets

The coding sheets of this study gathered data of: a) the date of the Facebook posts; b) medium used for presenting content; c) total number of word count per post; and d) total number of reactions, shares and comments per post. A separate coding sheet was used in the identification of most dominant themes used.

Data gathering procedures

The data were gathered manually by the researcher by visiting the Facebook pages of the politicians. Thematic analysis and the determination of frequencies were also done manually. MS Word and MS Excel were simultaneously used by the researcher in encoding the data. Relevant data were obtained by this study through the use of coding sheets.

The period by which the data were retrieved was from April 7 to May 7.

Data analysis

This study only employed nominal and ordinal statistical measurements. The researcher also used simple percentage to interpret the data. Mean and mode were also widely used in describing patterns and common trends from the data collected.

To determine the theme, each of the Facebook posts was analyzed manually through evaluative examination.

Results and Discussions

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part presents the results and the common trends and patterns from the data gathered without any analysis or interpretations. It is further subdivided into six subsections, each corresponding to the objectives of this study. In the second part, a discussion section was written which includes the interpretation of the data as well as the application of relevant theories and citation of findings from different studies in support of the results of this study.

Results

Most dominant medium used: Table 1 below shows the rankings of the most dominant medium used by politicians in presenting information in Facebook. The data revealed that all five of them dominantly use "text and photo" as their medium. This result suggests that politicians employ the strategy of catching first the attention of the viewers and thereupon include their political messages in the caption or in the photo itself. There were no more common patterns observed thereafter. It was, however, interesting to note that in 2nd most widely used medium, three out of five politicians used 'text and video,' while the other two used 'text, link and photo (Table 2).

For Binay, he used 'text and photo' in 70% of his posts. After his most dominant medium, it was followed by 'text and video' which accounted for 11%, then 'text, link and photo,' for 10%. It is noticeable that from the data gathered, there is a wide gap between 1st and 2nd most used medium which is up high by more than one-half (60%) of all his total posts. In the graph below (Graph 1), the percentages of usage of different medium were presented to have a more elaborative view of the results.

On the other hand, Santiago used 'text and photo' in more than half (53%) of her posts. The results further showed that 'text, link and photo' follow her list at 16%, then 'text and video' at 13%. Succeeding results demonstrated that Santiago used different kinds of medium for only less than 5% of her posts. Among the five candidates, Santiago used 10 different media by which she was followed by Binay at 9 different media. The graph below (Graph 2) presents a visual representation of the data.

Of all the politicians, meanwhile, Duterte used the least number of different medium used. From all of his 50 posts in one month, Duterte only used five different kinds of medium. These medium with their corresponding percentage of usage are: text and photo (56%), text, link and video (22%), text and video (18%), text, link and photo (2%) and photo (2%). The graph below (Graph 3) shows the visual representation above mentioned results.

| Summary of Themes |
| --- |
| **Personal Life**- It includes posts related to the hobbies and interest of politicians. It may also include personal experiences aside from their official duties such as their biography, credentials, academic distinctions, etc. It also include posts depicting them to be doing something that is supposed to be done in private such as praying. |
| **Election Campaigns and Political Advertisements** - It includes posts related to their campaign escapades. It also covers political strategies that include statements of rhetoric value which may encourage voters to vote for him or her and the repetition of slogans in their posts. |
| **Self-Descriptions** - These include descriptions that may uplift the image and/or character of oneself. The posts include acts that improve their image build-up. Examples of this are posts describing their own self or a recorded quote of video speaking about him or her |
| **Experience in Government Service -** It includes their past and present activities as an employee in the legislative, executive and judicial branch of the government. It also includes posts which attach the previous or current government title of a politician such as Mayor, Senator or Secretary preceding their names. |
| **Advocacies and Electoral Platforms** - This includes posts which tackle about an advocacy or platform which indicate their implementation in due time after they are elected into office. It also includes the depiction of personal advocacy and commitments that are underway and there is a hint of continuation for future purposes. |
| **Quasi-Official Functions** - It includes posts showing their attendance to national or local occasions organized by the government or other community events such as fiestas and graduation. During their attendance, they were invited as honored guests or speakers. It is only applicable to candidates with current positions in government. |
| **Public Announcements** - It include posts which about news updates, a notice for an upcoming calamity or disaster and posts which acknowledge representatives of the country to international competitions. It includes posts which incorporate links from news and media agencies. |
| **Political Positions** - It includes posts which express opinion both coming from local, national or international origins. These issues may refer to a pressing issue about certain groups or persons, things, world events other trending subjects. |
| **Entertainment** - The purpose of these posts are to enjoy, amuse and/or entertain the viewers. This includes posts depicting videos and pictures with amusing tone whether the subject is in relation to politics or not. |

Table 1: Themes and corresponding criteria.

| Ranking	1st			2nd			3rd			4th			5th			6th			7th			8th			9th			10th			Total	
	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F
Binay	A	124	70	B	20	11	C	18	10	D	5	3	E	3	2	F	2	1	G	2	1	H	2	1	F	1	1				177	100
Santiago	A	71	53	C	22	17	B	17	13	H	7	5	G	5	4	E	4	4	D	2	2	F	2	2	K	2	2	I		2	132	100
Duterte	A	28	56	C	11	22	B	9			I	1	2	F	1	2																50	100
Poe	A	62	55	B	21	19	C	18	17	L	5	6	E	2	1	I	2	1	H	2	1										122	100
Roxas	A	73	54	B	29	22	E	12	10	J	10	7	G	5	4	I	2	1	K	1	1	H	1	1							133	100

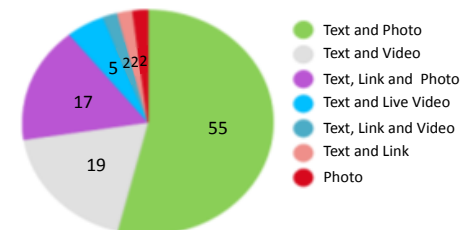Table 2: Most Dominantly Used Medium to Present Information.
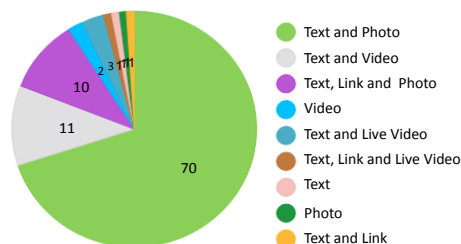
Graph 1: Percentages of usage of different kinds of medium by Binay.
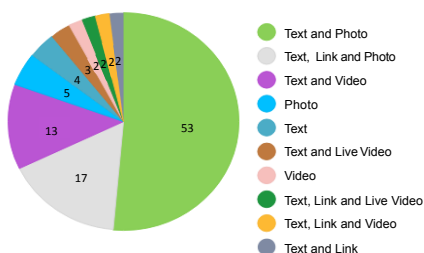
Graph 2: Percentages of usage of different kinds of medium by Santiago.
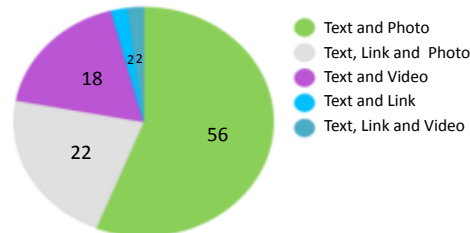
Graph 3: Percentages of usage of different kinds of medium by Duterte.

Graph 4: Percentages of usage of different kinds of medium by Poe.

The results of Poe follow the same trend in having wide margin from the top-most used medium to the next that follows. After the most dominant medium, in her case she used for 55% of her posts, 'text and video' followed at 19%. 'Text, link and photo,' placed at third sport (17%).' For Poe, there is a difference of 36% from the most dominant to the second one that followed (Graph 4).

For Roxas, on the other while, he used 'text and photo' for 54% of his posts, 'text and video' for 22%, 10% for 'text and live video,' then 7% plain 'live video' 4% plain 'text,' 2% 'text, link and photo,' and each 2% for 'text, link, and video' and plain 'photo.' Of all the politicians, politicians recorded the most prolific use of 'live video' of the actual broadcast of his activities (Graph 5).

From the results of the data gathered, the researcher summarly

noticed that politicians heavily use 'text and photo' which constitutes more than half of their Facebook postings. This finding suggests that there is a high extent of utilization of this kind of medium probably because they found it strategically advantageous from others. As compared to other kinds of medium, it is perhaps because of its desirable and fulfilling features that provided its edge (Graph 6).

Average word count: In Table 2, average words, and the shortest and longest posts are indicated. The latter was included by the researcher only to enrich the understanding of the word count in the posts of politicians. As observed, Binay used an average of 35 words in his posts while Santiago use 53, Duterte 34, Poe 43 and 141 words for Roxas, the highest among them.

During the examination of their shortest Facebook posts, Binay recorded the least words used in a post which only consists of three words. Four words were the shortest for Santiago, seven for Duterte, three for Poe, and six words for Roxas.

Erstwhile, the longest post of Binay consisted only of 151 words while Santiago for 466 words, Duterte for 108 words, Poe for 990 words, and Roxas for 3,639. Roxas recorded having the longest post among them. The average word in all five of them was also determined to have a glimpse of the ideal words in a post. Results showed that ideally, a post should be composed of 61 words (Table 3).

The researcher also computed the average word count from the individual word count averages of the politicians. The researcher assumed that at the very least, it can provide us a general picture of the ideal number of words in a post that will perhaps encourage our possible audience to read its content. This data furthermore helps in the understanding of the extent by which politicians utilize words to respond to the needs of their campaigns.

Frequency of updates: The intensity of posting updates was also observed by this study to know how well politicians use Facebook to intensify their virtual presence which might as well amplify their
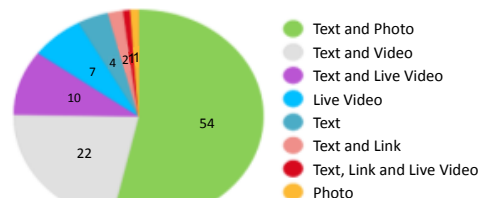
Graph 5: Percentages of usage of different kinds of medium by Roxas.
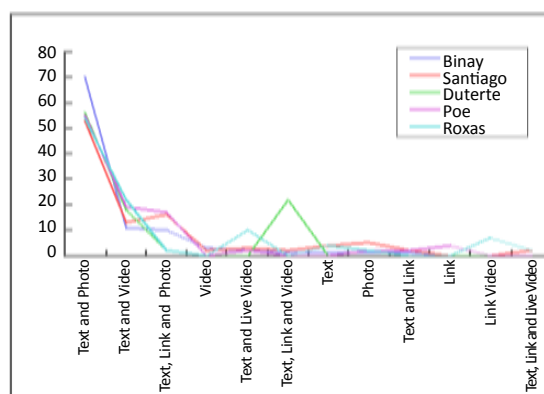
Graph 6: Comparative frequency of using different medium of presenting Facebook Information by Politicians.

popularity in the physical world which consequentially might improve their chances of winning elections.

Table 3 below shows the weekly frequency of updates by politicians. In the initial observation of the researcher, all politicians except Duerte, exhibit a common pattern in the intensification of their Facebook activities, the month preceding elections. It was noticed that, as elections are nearing, politicians posted more on their Facebook pages (Graph 2). This, the study suggests, perhaps is driven by their intent to amplify their presence in the virtual and consequentially in the real word or so that they can 'catch-up' with their ratings in the polls (Table 4 and Graph 7).

However, despite this assumption, it is also worth to mention that the Facebook page of Duterte posted less (during the gathering period) as compared to other candidates. The data were implored to know whether the intensification is driven to increase the popularity of a politician which will eventually decrease if such goal is achieved as in the case of Duterte.

As shown in Table 4 below, the least number of posts Binay published in a single a day is one and 14 being the highest. There was no day that Binay missed posting. Santiago meanwhile has three days by which she did not post. Her highest number of multiple posts in a day is 14, on May 7, the last day for campaign period and two days prior to elections. Duterte, on the other hand, had seven days which he did not post. The highest number of his multiple posts is 12, in April 24. Poe follows the same where she posted 14 posts on April 24. She also did not miss any day where she posted. Lastly, as for the case of Roxas, he also did not miss any day of which he posted, 17 being the highest

Politicians	Average words	Shortest post	Longest post
Binay	35	3	151
Santiago	53	4	466
Duterte	34	7	108
Poe	43	3	990
Roxas	141	6	3639
Average	**61**	**5**	**1071**

Table 3: Average Word Count, and Shortest and Longest Posts.

Weekly Posts					
Politicians	April 10-16	April 17-23	April 24-30	May 1-7	Total
Binay	24	34	46	52	**156**
Santiago	16	24	36	50	**126**
Duterte	10	6	17	12	**45**
Poe	17	21	33	33	**104**
Roxas	24	21	38	38	**121**

Table 4: Weekly Frequency of Updates.

Graph 7: Weekly frequency of updates.
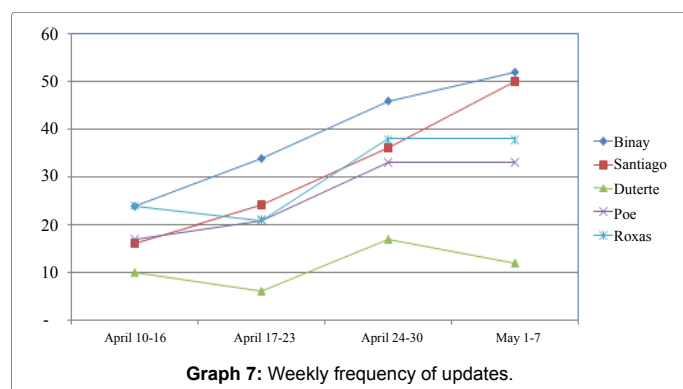
number which was also published one after another in April 24. The average number of posts is: Binay six, Santiago four, Duterte two, Poe, four, and Roxas also three. Observing Graph 3, it can be noticed that politicians posted immensely on May 7 and April 24. Practically the reason for this is that; for the former, the campaign period and also the day where politicians conducted their individual Mitting De Advances; for the latter, however, it is the day of the last of the three PILIpinas Debates. So it can be attributed that there is an increase in their activities during those days because there are political conventions by which they want people to be aware of and so they amplify their virtual presence by making multiple posts in a day (Graph 8 and Table 5).

Degree of interaction: Table 5 below shows the degree of interaction. Fundamentally, such data was collected to know how well Facebook audience interacts with the politicians. Its graphical representation (Graph 9) was also provided for better comparative inspection (Table 6).

Looking at the results, it can be noticed that Binay had the least average reactions and average shares while being the second among the lowest in average comments. In the graph of his engagement rate, Graph 10, it can be noticed that there was a great fluctuation beginning April 29. The figures did not keep up from its previous pace thereafter.

Santiago meanwhile ranked 3rd among politicians having the

Daily posts					
	Binay	Santiago	Duterte	Poe	Roxas
07-May	13	14	3	6	12
06-May	8	8	1	8	5
05-May	8	10	1	3	9
04-May	4	7	2	4	5
03-May	6	4	0	3	2
02-May	6	4	3	3	2
01-May	7	3	1	6	3
30-Apr	7	6	0	3	3
29-Apr	6	6	1	5	3
28-Apr	3	7	3	2	5
27-Apr	5	4	0	2	2
26-Apr	6	2	1	3	5
25-Apr	5	3	1	4	3
24-Apr	14	8	12	14	17
23-Apr	6	0	0	3	3
22-Apr	5	4	0	1	2
21-Apr	4	3	1	6	3
20-Apr	4	9	1	3	3
19-Apr	4	3	2	2	4
18-Apr	5	4	1	2	3
17-Apr	6	1	1	4	3
16-Apr	6	3	2	2	2
15-Apr	1	3	2	3	2
14-Apr	1	3	1	3	7
13-Apr	4	5	1	4	3
12-Apr	6	0	0	3	5
11-Apr	4	2	0	1	2
10-Apr	8	0	4	1	3
09-Apr	4	2	3	3	2
08-Apr	5	1	1	2	7
07-Apr	6	3	1	3	3
Total	**177**	**132**	**50**	**112**	**133**
Average daily posts	**6**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**4**

Table 5: Daily Frequency of Updates.
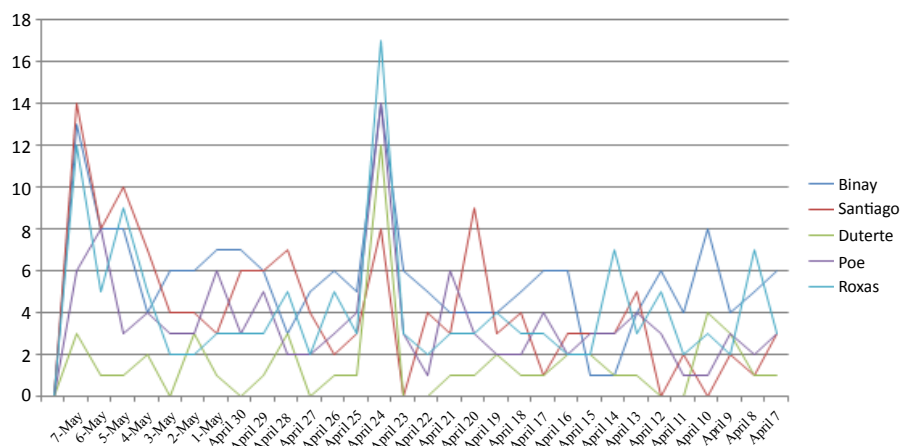
Graph 8: Daily frequency updates of Politicians.
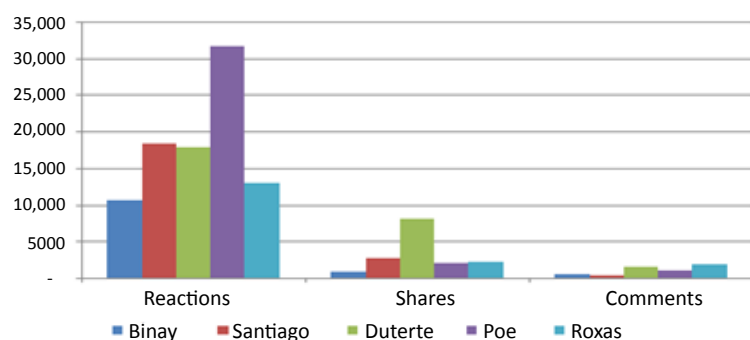
Graph 9: Interaction rate through reactions.

Degree of Engagement							
	Average reactions	%	Average share	%	Average comments	%	Total	%
Binay	10,785	11.71	1,065	6.43	735	12.23	12,603	10.99
Santiago	18,478	20.06	2,794	16.86	469	7.80	21,778	18.99
Duterte	18,000	19.54	8,216	49.59	1660	27.62	27,945	24.37
Poe	31,784	34.51	2,134	12.88	1146	19.07	35,111	30.61
Roxas	13064	14.18	2,360	14.24	2001	33.29	17,453	15.22
Total	**92,111**	**100**	**16,569**	**6,011**	**6011**	**100.00**	**114,891**	**100**

Table 6: Degree of Interactions in the Facebook Pages of Politicians.
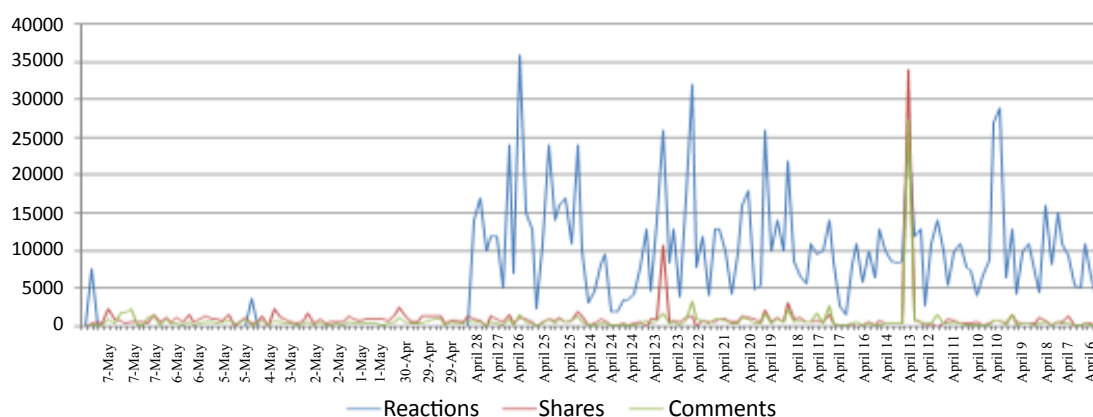
Graph 10: Interaction rate in the Facebook Page of Binay.

highest average reactions. She also placed second among politicians with the highest average number of shares and the lowest however in the average comments (Graph 11).

Duterte supporters, on other hand, had a different way of interacting to their candidate's Facebook Page. It can be noted that Duterte remained to be always at the top three. The page was third in terms of reactions, first in shares and second for comments (Graph 12).

The case of Poe, on the other hand, takes a different track. While being considered the highest in reactions, she was second with the lowest average number of shares and the third lowest to average comments (Graph 13).

Lastly, for the case of Roxas, he ranked second among politicians

with the lowest reactions, third in the average share and the highest in the average number of comments (Graph 14).

A side from analyzing the figures from individual reactions, shares, and comments, Facebook metrics say, if one wants to measure the actual interaction rate in a Facebook page; all three of them shall be added. Facebook further explained that this is because anything the user does in a post by clicking is already presumed to be an act an interaction of oneself to that post.

Hence, another aspect investigated by this study is getting the overall interaction rate on the Facebook page of politicians by adding reactions, shares, and comments.
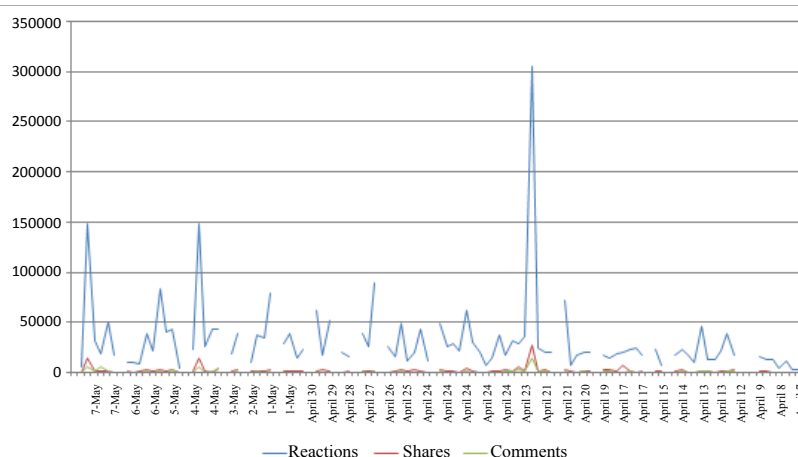
Results showed that, the Facebook page of Poe has the highest
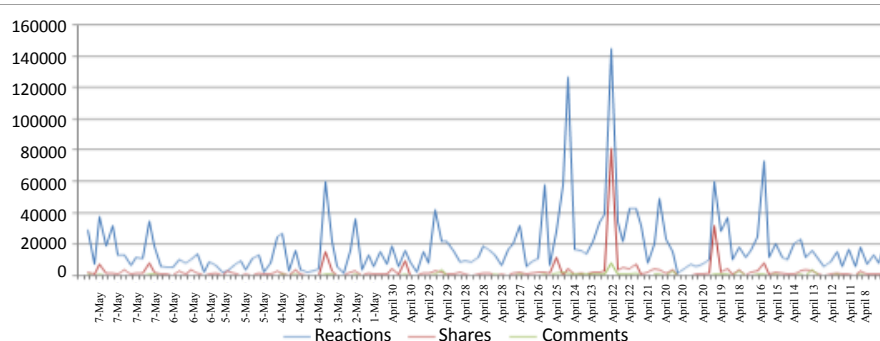
Graph 11: interaction rate in the Facebook Page of Santiago.
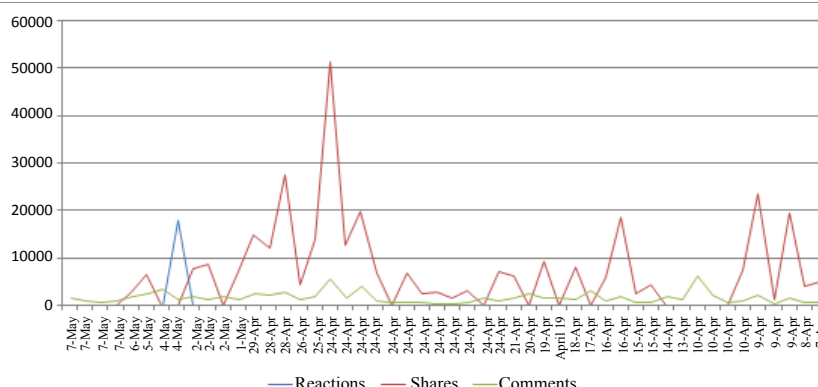
Graph 12: Interaction rate in the Facebook Page of Duterte.

Graph 13: Interaction rate in the Facebook Page of Poe.

interaction rate scoring 35,111 interactions which is also equivalent to one-third (30.61%) of the total interactions in the Facebook pages of the five politicians. It was followed by Duterte's with 27,945 interactions or comprising one-fourth (24.37%) of the total interactions ratings. Duterte is then followed by Santiago with 21,778 interactions equivalent to one-fifth (18.99%), Roxas at 17,453 interactions equivalent to one-seventh (15.22%) of total interactions. Binay ranked the lowest with interaction rating of only 12,603 or just one-tenth (10.99%) of all Facebook interactions by politicians. Figuratively, he is nearly 5,000 away from Roxas. The graph below (Graph 15) shows the comparative interaction rate in the Facebook pages of politicians.
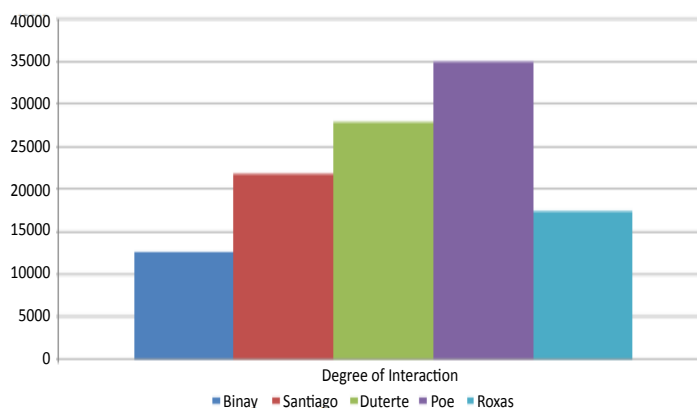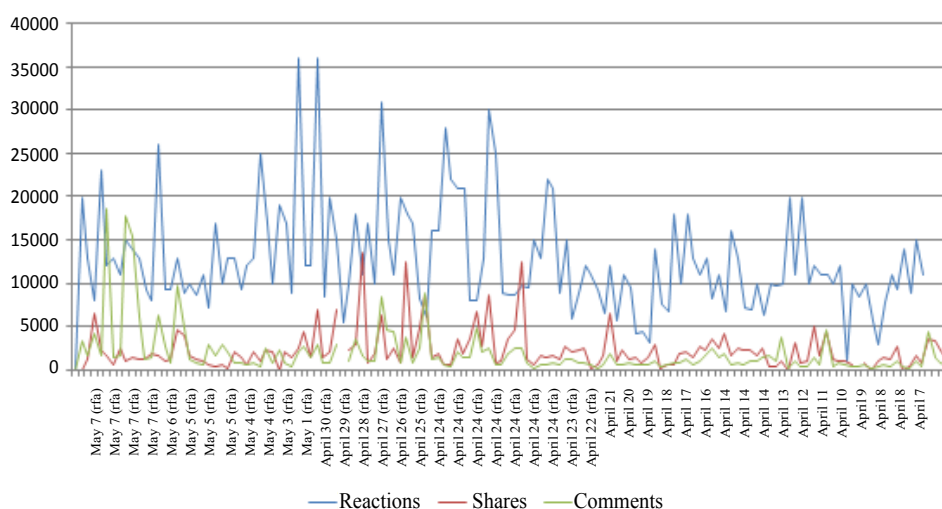
By looking at the interaction rate, it is possible that we can have a general impression of the quality of supporters of each politician. Take for instance the figures in Duterte's interaction rate. The data above suggests that he had strong Facebook supporters since act of 'sharing' of the posts can be equated to 'substantial political support.' Moreover, the manner of sharing virtually helps the spreading of political information rather than just by 'reacting' and 'commenting.' Thus, it can be argued perhaps that one who shared posts takes part in the political marketing as well as campaign for the candidate.

Also, by obtaining the results of the interaction rate, we can generate a picture of how politicians are standing well in terms of campaigning in Facebook. Although it remains to be seen whether online support can be converted to actual support during elections, as the findings of the study suggest, it can still be useful in making the names of politicians popular and may as well contribute to the capacity of the people for name-recall.
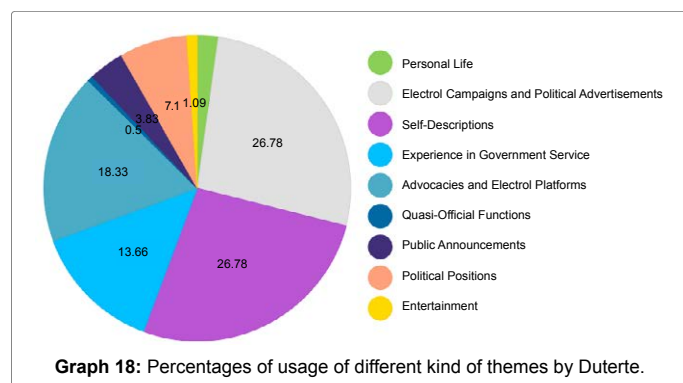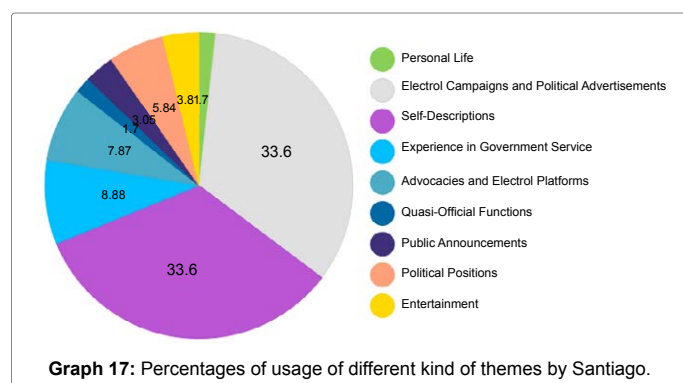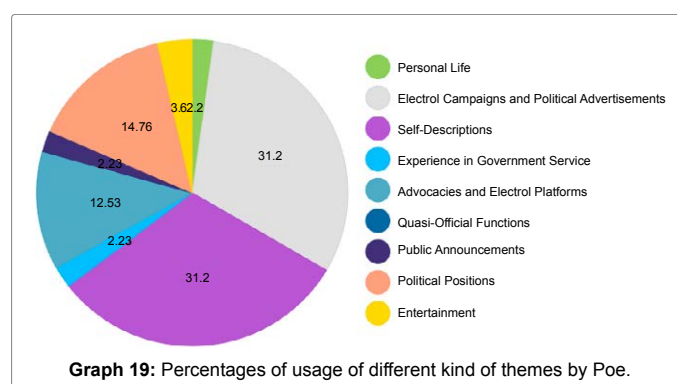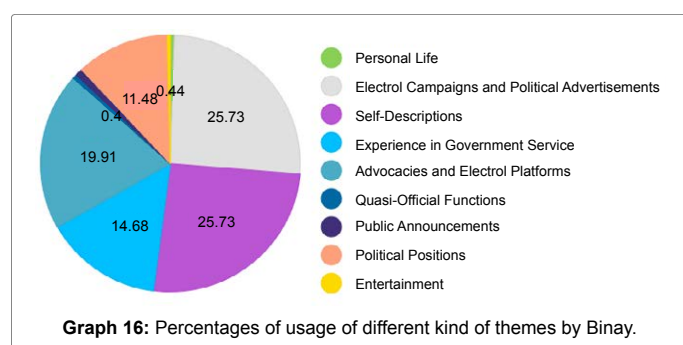
Most dominant theme used: Themes of each of the Facebook posts were also identified by the researcher to obtain knowledge on what kind of information politicians most likely to propagate in their Facebook pages. There are nine themes identified by this study particularly personal life, electoral campaigns and political advertisements, self-descriptions, experience in government service, advocacies and electoral platforms, quasi-official functions, public announcements, political positions and entertainment (Table 7).

Results reflected in Table 6 above showed that, for Binay, he is likely to propagate 'political advertisements' and 'self-descriptions.' These comprised a fourth (25.73%) of his total posts which was followed by 'advocacies and electoral platforms' comprising a fifth (19.91%) then by 'experience in government service comprising a seventh (14.68%) and posts about his 'political positions which consists a tenth (11.48%) of his total posts. The least that he is likely to post are information about 'quasi-official duties and 'entertainment' which barely scored a percent. Graph 16 below shows the graphic format of the results of Binay.

Graph 14: Interaction rate in the Facebook Page of Roxas.

Graph 15: Comparative Interaction rate in the Facebook Pages of Politicians.

Information Most Likely Propagated by Politicians in Facebook											
	Binay		Santiago		Duterte		Poe		Roxas		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Personal life	4	0.58	7	1.78	4	2.19	8	2.23	1	0.25	24	1.18
Electoral capmpaigns and political Advertisements	177	25.73	132	33.50	49	26.78	122	31.20	127	31.44	597	29.44
Self-descriptions	177	25.73	132	33.50	49	26.78	112	31.20	125	30.94	595	29.34
Experience in Government service	101	14.68	35	8.88	25	13.66	8	2.23	13	3.22	182	8.97
Advocacies and Electoral platforms	137	19.91	31	7.87	33	18.03	45	12.53	74	18.32	320	15.78
Quasi-official functions	3	0.44	7	1.78	1	0.55	0	0.00	0	0.00	11	0.54
Public announcements	7	1.02	12	3.05	7	3.83	8	2.23	2	0.50	36	1.78
Political positions	79	11.48	23	5.84	13	7.10	53	14.76	57	14.11	225	11.09
Entertainment	3	0.44	15	3.81	2	1.09	13	3.62	5	1.24	38	1.87
Total	**688**	**100**	**394**	**100**	**183**	**100**	**359**	**100**	**404**	**100**	**2028**	**100**

Table 7: Information Most Likely Propagated by Politicians.

Graph 16: Percentages of usage of different kind of themes by Binay.

Graph 17: Percentages of usage of different kind of themes by Santiago.

Graph 18: Percentages of usage of different kind of themes by Duterte.

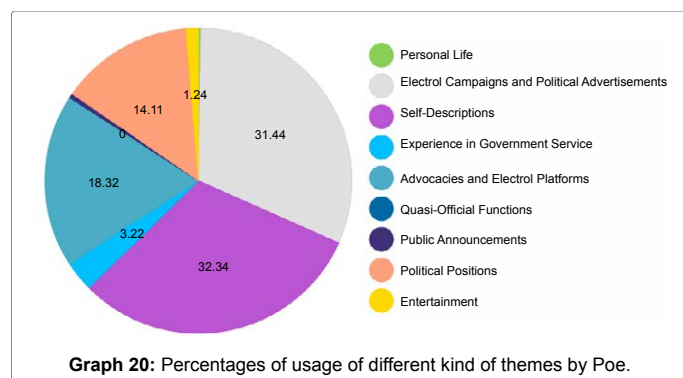**Graph 19:** Percentages of usage of different kind of themes by Poe.

For Santiago, 'political advertisements' (33.50%) and 'self-descriptions' (33.50%) ranked topmost in the information most likely propagated. Her list followed 'experience at government service' (8.88%) then by 'advocacies and electoral platforms' (7.87%) the posts in relation to her 'political positions' (5.84%). The least kind of theme used by Santiago are information related to her 'personal life' (1.78%) and 'quasi-official functions' (1.78%). Graph 17 shows the elaboration of the results of Santiago.

Duterte, on the other hand, followed the pattern of having 'political advertisements' and 'self-descriptions' at the top of the list comprising one-fourth (26.78) of his total posts. His list was then followed by his emphasis to 'advocacies and electoral platforms' comprising one-fifth (18.03%), then posts about his 'experience in government service' (13.66%), then of his 'political positions' which scored nearly a one-tenth (7.10%) of his total postings. His least used theme is 'quasi-official functions' which constitute barely a percent. Graph 18 shows the graphic representation of the results of Duterte. the same as well for Poe, 'political advertisements' and 'self-descriptions' were dominantly used each at 31.2% followed by 'political positions' at 14.76%, then 'advocacies and platforms' at 12.53%, then entertainment at 3.62%. Among her least used least used theme were 'public announcements' and 'experience in government service' at 2.23%. Graph 19 shows its illustration. In the case of Roxas, 'political advertisements' (31.44%) marginally differed from its usually tantamount rating, which is 'self-descriptions' (30.94%). His list then followed 'advocacies and electoral platforms' at 18.32% then his 'political positions' at 14.11%. His least used theme includes is 'quasi-official duties' at zero recurrences. Such result was expected since he is not anymore employed in the government when he resigned as Secretary of DILG in August 2015 (Graph 20).

To have a lighter view of the voluminous data, Graph 16 was provided to allow keener observations to their difference across each other. As shown, all five of them use 'political advertisements' which accounts for 29.44% of all their posts. It was followed by 'self-descriptions' at 29.34%. Considering the political climate when this

Graph 20: Percentages of usage of different kind of themes by Poe.
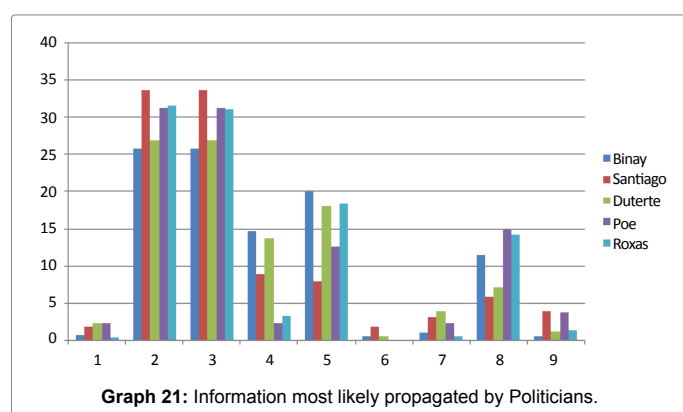
Graph 21: Information most likely propagated by Politicians.

study was conducted, the researcher already recognized that these two themes might eventually dominate the results. Nonetheless, such findings helped in the understanding on how politicians 'sell' themselves to the public, or the manner in which they depict themselves to be able to obtain support and subsequently the votes of the people (Graph 21).

However, it is also worthy to remark the results aside from the two expected to really rise through the ranks. The data gathered showed surprising results which in a large sense, to the researcher's view, really reflected the political climate of the 2016 Philippine National elections.

In the third most propagated information, 'advocacies and electoral platforms' consists the 15.78% of the total posts. 'Political positions' then followed at 11.09% then by 'experience in government service' at 8.97.

Among the least used themes are: 'quasi-official functions' comprising only 0.54% of the total posts of politicians and by 'personal life' at 1.18%.

Discussion

In Facebook, we create our own virtual personalities. Being a static data, Facebook posts can be viewed anytime by those who want to conduct background checks, especially for people with "assumed" or "actual" public figure image. In contemporary 21st century, Facebook is the domain by which politicians can connect towards the people. It can be a platform where they can establish connection with their constituents. Hence, when using social media most especially as political machinery and an instrument for election campaign, the content and presentation of information shall be a paramount concern.

As compared with traditional media, social media, as channel for communication, provides politicians the discretion on the kind of portrayal or depiction they wanted to be in the eyes of the public [15]. This bypass the lengthy news filtration that even sometimes undergone numerous cuttings and ad-ons through inclusions of so many interpretations and expert opinions sought by media companies. Social media, however, provided politicians a counter force to refute or affirm the information presented in the traditional ones making the former ever careful than before.

The presence of politicians in social media does not necessarily mean that neither people will act as surveillance nor voluntarily participate as captive audiences for all of the politicians' activities. Therefore, politicians need to employ tactics and strategies that will truly encourage the audience to take participate in the conversation threads under their pages [15]. In so doing, politicians need first to get hold of the attention of the viewers that is through the manner by which the information was presented and then incorporate the political message that they want to impart. If they fail to catch the attention of the audience, most likely, they will not read it and no transmission of political information will happen and consequentially an absence of communication. If there is an absence of communication, their purpose of being present in social media is futile. It is thus useful to get fruitful insights from this study about the behaviour of politicians in Facebook as well as their audience.

Beginning with the medium of presentation, results showed that all of the politicians use a combination of 'text and photo' as the most dominant medium used in presenting Facebook content. Also common about them the heavy usage of the said medium. It was observed that the medium was used in at least half of their total posts. Such result demonstrated a high degree of utilization by which we can argue that it is strategically advantageous from other medium possibly because of its features. Describing its desirable and fulfilling features, it is essentially both the quality of the medium to be able to catch or harness the attention of the audience and an enough space for the inclusion of the political message. Moreover, unlike other medium, 'text and photo' may offer convenient consumption of information because it does not require so much time as for 'videos' nor require the viewers to move from one page to another as for 'links.'

Although they all agree at the top spot, the second one remains in question. In the 2nd most widely used medium, three out of five politicians used 'text and video,' while the other two used 'text, link and photo.' The inconsistencies of these results, thus, do not present substantive pattern or trend for generalization.

It is meanwhile in the usage of different kinds of medium that we can judge a pattern to be significant. Adopting the measurement of Aurelio [16], we can say that among the five candidates Santiago is the most familiar in using Facebook applications as witnessed in her capability to use 10 different kinds of medium. Binay can be ranked as the second most familiar to using such features.

Beyond these different analyses, however, all of them stem down to the fact that the extent by which politicians use different kinds of medium contributes to the likelihood of audiences interacting with the posts.

On the other while, come the results for average word count, there was a wide gap between politicians with highest average words in a post to politicians having the lowest. Manuel Roxas ranked highest in the number of words used in Facebook posts obtaining a figure of 141 words as average. Rodrigo Duterte, in the meantime, used only 34 words on average which was considered as the lowest. On average, all five of them use 61 words.

Interesting results were gathered from the data which were accordingly interpreted by the researcher. Of the most notable is the case of Roxas gaining the highest average at 141 words with a longest post consisting of 3,639 words. It can be said that among the candidates, Roxas was the most verbose. This result can also be related to the tendencies of Roxas to provide so much explanation himself or his actions. Hypothetically, it can be said that because of this, audience members find Roxas less attractive thus he ranked 2nd with the lowest interactions.

Generating a sound judgment from this, it can be said that the extent by which politicians use words in their online campaigns prove to have significant bearing to the likelihood of supporters interacting in the posts.

There is also another significant finding discovered from associating the average word count, frequency of updates and the degree of interaction. It was observed that Roxas, Santiago and Poe are the top three politicians using highest average word count in a post. They respectively ranked 4th, 3rd, and 2nd on the list of politicians with most interactions. It was confusing though that in the case of Binay; he is 2nd in rank with the least used words in a post but then again ranked the lowest in the degree of interaction. It is worthy to point out that Binay, although having least number of words in a post, posted most often than other politicians. On average, his daily post is six while for four for Santiago, Poe and Roxas and two for Duterte. Having this data on hand, it can be safely hypothesized that the more politicians load content in their pages, the lesser interactions they will have. It is then advisable for politicians that they balance the volume of content in their pages rather than thinking singularly that it is neither only the average word count nor just the frequency of updates that matters. They should keep track of both when managing their pages.

Furthermore, it was found out that the frequency of updates can be related to the amplification of presence in the virtual world. Seeing some relevance with the study of Hillard [12], it can also be argued that Facebook pages can serve as support systems for the supporters of politicians. These support systems serve as nodes for communication between supporters and politicians and supporters between themselves. They primarily contribute to the confidence of the supporters to their candidates and keep their stance despite pressures from surrounding people who do not have the same choice as they are. This contention also coincided with the assumption of Hayness et al. [19], saying "(Politicians) can create networks of supporters across the country within an online community where there is no spiral of silence, but rather a tornado of talking about their candidate. Even if they live in an area where no one supports their candidate, an individual can connect with thousands of others, perhaps allowing the candidate to keep that supports which before might have been lost."

Another analysis was formulated from the indefinite frequency of updates in the page of Duterte, who, among the five; the only one demonstrated contrasting results from the obvious pattern. It was commonly observed in the results of Binay, Santiago, Poe and Roxas that, as elections were nearing, they were also increasing the frequency of their posts or for some just at least maintaining the number. It can be hypothesized that it is probably because Duterte already achieved the end of Facebook utilization, i.e. influencing the people to vote for him (made known through the surveys) which signalled complacency in his part and thus decrease in his activities online.

Stating these, it can be inferred that the extent by which politicians update their Facebook pages is beneficial for both the politicians and their supporters. For politicians, being active in social media means the amplification of their virtual presence which consequently leads to their popularity in the real world. For supporters, on the other while, support systems keep them at reach with their candidates and so the maintenance, if not improvement, of their confidence to their candidates.

In terms of the theme, meanwhile, a common pattern was observed between the first and second themes widely used. All posts related to political advertisements are in most, if not all, accompanied by posts depicting self-descriptions. This finding supports the results of the survey conducted by Public us Asia Inc., about the political interests, attitudes, opinions (or IAO) and beliefs of young voters conducted last March 2015. According to the survey, voters care most about the character of political candidates rather than their platforms or electoral agenda.

Provided this data, results of this study support that there is in fact persistence of personality politics in the Philippines [20]. Such finding, as explained by Montiel is an alarming issue not just for politicians but also for the government in general. If personalistic politics is underway, Montiel explained that politicians might also handle politics and government in a personalistic way because it was founded in personal relations. According to her, this orientation may be detrimental to the government because of the possibility that personal relationships may take precedence over political principles or issues of governance.

Aside from such meaningful finding, this study also explored colorful interpretations of the data by analyzing the recurrence of fluctuations, or the dramatic rise and fall of the results. As initially observed by the researcher, it was noticed that in most areas, results across politicians do not usually go far beyond one another. If not having the same figures, differences were usually consistent with only tiny gaps in between. In this sense, differences were at marginal basis and the gap between the highest percentages was at least not half from the lowest. Relying to these criteria, the researcher attempted to interpret this in succeeding discussions.

As observed by the researcher, there was no noticeable fluctuation in the following themes: electoral campaigns and political advertisements, self-descriptions, quasi-official functions, and public announcements. On the other hand, fluctuations were observed in personal life, experience in government service, advocacies and electoral platforms, political positions and entertainment.

Following descending order, a fluctuation was observed in the result of Binay in the theme, entertainment. For purposes of discussion, it is worthy to mention that, during campaign period, each of the politicians emphasized a certain aspect of their platform which branded their own individual campaigns [21]. Roxas emphasized for jobs and economy, Poe for the marginalized sectors and purity in government service, Duterte for criminality and drugs, Santiago for corruption in the government, and Binay for the poor masses It can be presumed that, because Binay emphasize pro-poor sentiment in his campaign, it would sound ironical if he will post amusing content in the middle of a dramatic atmosphere. Hence, he had to control his posts which employ entertainment as their theme. Well, if common sense proves to be right, such judgment is in fact strategic.

Secondly, it can be observed that Santiago and Duterte demonstrated poor results in the theme, political positions. It can be recalled that these two candidates were actually the most controversial because of their public statements that always catches the lens of the media. Santiago had been issuing even prior to her candidacy strong

and intellectual statements on different national issues [22-24]. While Duterte became popular with his careless remarks [25,26]. Possibly, these two candidates regulated their postings related to political positions because they are also being careful. They also perhaps acknowledge that they have tendencies to issue intriguing statements and posting about it would be a substantial evidence for interpretation of its actual meaning which were in reality derived from their impulsiveness. In worst case scenario, it would allow no room for denial and the usual 'out-of-context' defensee is hardly to be invoked because it will just fire-up another attack, this time on the credibility of the politician.

Thirdly, Santiago again exhibited poor result in advocacies and electoral platforms. If interpreted, we can say that probably, Santiago is just careful in engineering her virtual campaign. Throughout her years of experience, Santiago has been known to be the avid fighter of corruption in the country and even considered an icon against corrupt practices. However, it is ironical that she posted less in this theme. In the analysis of the researcher, it can be assumed that may be Santiago was just structuring her virtual campaign in such a manner that will totally brand her apart from her opponents. With the rupture of various national issues that stimulate our politics, politicians are often caught off guard to respond in the pressure of the media to publicize their individual positions. So if Santiago entertains them, her political branding would become blurry and at worst would fall into darkness.

Such presumption may render sound rationality. However, to an intellectualal luminary like Santiago, it is too much play-safe and nonetheless shallow. Another interpretation may be is that, Santiago plays very well in social media and sought practical application of new findings by playing with the voting preference of the people and thus led to a balloon number of posts using the themes, electoral campaigns and political advertisements and self-descriptions.

Next on the list is the fluctuations served in the theme, experience in government service. Santiago's result were to slightly fell to fluctuate and was not considered to be one because it was not necessarily half of the highest which is the criteria used by this study to determine a fluctuation. But then again, it left wonder to the researcher that Santiago ranked 3rd in the list of politicians with lowest score in the said theme.

It has been known that years prior to elections, Santiago has tendencies to flaunt her achievements corollary to her political branding as an icon against corrupt practices [23,27]. But this result showed otherwise. Maybe this is because Santiago perceived that the public had already been conditioned to think of her in that way hence redundant mention will fire a 'conceited image' of Santiago which is of course a big no in the voting preference of Filipinos.

Another fluctuation in the same theme was observed in the result of Poe and Roxas. To recall, a major criticism for Poe is her inadequate experience in government service [28]. Which some even ridiculed that she will become an OJT president [29]. For Roxas meanwhile, a major criticism against him is his rocky track record. Roxas is often criticized as an official who is doomed to fail in all his task just like in typhoon Yolanda [30]. And his under-performance as DOTC secretary [31]. It can be hypothesized that Poe and Roxas are anxious to post information related to their experience in government service probably because those are their shortcomings as candidates.

The last fluctuation was observed in the theme, personal life, for Binay and Roxas. The former who was, during at that time, enraged by different political scandals mainly corruption controversies [32,33]. And the latter who were always identified to be carrying in his name the

torch of elite class Filipinos [34]. These probably are the reasons why they limited their postings tackling such topic.

Laying the gist of the thematic analysis, it was found out that the extent by which politicians use different kinds of themes bears significant value in engineering the social media campaigns of politicians to make it more favourable and advantageous in their part.

Conclusively, the findings of this study support the assumption of uses and gratifications theory. It was affirmed that Facebook audience are not only active but also very selective users, as evidenced by wide variations in the degree of interaction. Moreover, these variations demonstrated that Facebook audience do not just interact for the sake of information but also to be involved in the communication process as participants (by reacting and commenting) and as agents (by sharing).

Furthermore, the findings also support the contention that with the advent of the 5th estate [35] Traditional media agencies, originally the 4th estate, now do not and cannot monopolize the production and delivery of news and information. Subsequently, the ability to set the public agenda and possibly the ability to order what the public should talk about is not monopolized and now within the range of organic sources of information including politicians.

If politicians equip social media to extend its political machinery, they will be able to challenge what traditional media is reporting. With the staticity of information being converted as web-content, they can endeavor on feeding the public with political information without limitations as compared to old fashioned information delivery by traditional media.

Fundamentally, however, results showed that the extent of utilization do not necessarily guarantee political success. There might also be other factors that contributed to the win ability of politicians during elections. Facebook campaigns may prove to be significant in the game of politics but it is not the one and only referee in this political struggle.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were formed:

The most dominant medium used by politicians was the combination of 'text and photo' this is perhaps because 'text and photos' offers best features to penetrate the attention of Facebook audience and eventually transpire communication. The favourable usage is that: photos should have enough design to harness the attention of the audience and thus convince them to read the text which should be used for the inclusion of the political message. Moreover, unlike other medium, 'text and photo' may offer convenient consumption of information because it does not require so much time as for 'videos' nor require the viewers to move from one page to another as for 'links.'

It was also observed that Santiago used the most number of medium. She used 10 different kinds in just a matter of one month. According to the measurement of Aurelio [16], Santiago demonstrated having the highest familiarity to Facebook applications.

Beyond these different analyses, however, all of them stem down to the fact that the extent by which politicians use different kinds of medium contributes to the likelihood of audiences interacting with the posts.

The average word count in the Facebook posts of the politicians are also obtained which revealed that: Binay use on average 35 words, Santiago with 53 words, Duterte with 34 (the lowest) Poe with 43, and

Roxas with 141 (the highest). These data were used in the attempt to identify the ideal number of words in a post by computing the average in all five of them. Results showed that it may ideally consist of 61 words. It was also identified that Roxas had the most words on average probably because of his tendencies to explain superfluously himself and his actions which eventually made him a less attractive candidate.

`Generating a sound judgment from this, it can be said that the extent by which politicians use words in their online campaigns prove to have significant bearing to the likelihood of supporters interacting in the posts.

In terms of frequency of updates, politicians except for Duterte increased their frequency in posting updates as the election was nearing. It was revealed that the average posts per day of politicians were: Binay posted an average of six daily, while Santiago, Poe and Roxas posted an average of four times daily. Duterte posted the lowest average at twice a day. In the analysis of the researcher, it is probably because Duterte already achieved the end of Facebook utilization, i.e. influencing the people to vote for him (made known through the surveys) which signalled complacency in his part and thus the eventual decrease in his activities online.

From the discussion, the researcher tried to argue on how the frequency of updates can be related to the amplification of presence in the virtual world. Meaning, if politicians increased the number of their postings, they may amplify their presence in the social media. If they do so, they will be able to establish support systems [12]. Which can help maintain or increase the latter's confidence over the former. This also proved to be true as in the assumption of Haynes (2008) who contends that "(politicians) can create networks of supporters across the country within an online community where there is no spiral of silence, but rather a tornado of talking about their candidate. Even if they live in an area where no one supports their candidate, an individual can connect with thousands of others, perhaps allowing the candidate to keep that supports which before might have been lost." The degree of interaction was also determined by summing the averages of reactions, shares and comments. Of the total interaction rates, Poe, Duterte and Santiago got the highest interaction rate compares to Binay and Roxas. By relating the degree of engagement to the volume of content presented, it can be safely hypothesized that the more politicians load content in their pages, the lesser interactions they will have Stating these, it can be inferred that the extent by which politicians update their Facebook pages is beneficial for both the politicians and their supporters. For politicians, being active in social media means the amplification of their virtual presence which consequently lead to their popularity in the real world. For supporters, on the other while, support systems keep them at reach with their candidates and so the maintenance, if not improvement, of their confidence to their candidates.

Meanwhile, in the most dominant theme used by politicians, it turned out that political advertisements ranked highest comprising of a third of all the consolidated posts of the politicians. Accompanied by posts about a third of which depict self-descriptions. These results suggest that Filipino politicians even when utilizing the social media are more inclined to promote themselves as 'person' and 'candidates' rather than as leaders with platforms and convictions. This finding is consistent with the observation on the persistence of personality politics in the Philippines [20]. The study also found out that politicians play safe in the kinds of information that they were posting. They posted more on areas which improve their image build-up particularly in their overall depiction as candidates. In addition, they posted less

on areas which might be considered their individual shortcomings or areas which they became complacent. This finding thus reflect the fact that online political campaigns are very selective especially in terms of content and highlight only those advantageous to the politicians and keep at the information that can compromise the politician's self-image. Laying the gist of the thematic analysis, it was found out that the extent by which politicians use different kinds of themes bears significant value in engineering the social media campaigns of politicians to make it more favourable and advantageous in their part.

Moreover, findings in this study generally support the assumptions of uses and gratifications theory. It affirmed the fact that Facebook audiences were not only active but also very selective users, as evidenced by wide variations in the degree of interaction. These variations demonstrated that Facebook audiences do not just interact for the sake of information but also are involve in the communication process as participants (by reacting and commenting) as well as agents (by sharing).

Furthermore, the findings also support the contention that with the advent of the 5th estate [35]. Traditional media agencies, originally the 4th estate, now do not and cannot monopolize the production and delivery of news and information. Subsequently, the ability to set the public agenda and possibly the ability to order what the public should talk about, a contention from agenda setting theory, are in nowadays monopolized by traditional media agencies and now within the range of organic sources of information including politicians. Finally, the results generally showed that the extent of utilization of Facebook does not necessarily guarantee the candidates political success especially in 'real and 'actual' votes during elections. However, social media platforms such as Facebook may prove to be a significant avenue that can mold and shape the opinions of voters especially the millennial or 'netizens' whose political choices often matters. Yet still, in the game of politics Facebook or is not the one and only referee in this political struggle.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusion, the following recommendations are presented:

For politicians and political parties to use the findings of this study to provide them insights with regards to engineering their online political campaigns. From the results, they can generate ideas on the different tactics and strategies of 2016 presidential candidates which they may also implore upon in the future.

For the academic community to include the study of the same phenomena in their curricula specifically in the community of students and faculty of politics and communication. The incorporation of teaching the effects of the internet, social media and social networks will help in the understanding of the evolving political culture of the country as well as the advancing communicatory processes. Its emphasis in classroom instruction will help them realize their identities and positions in the global perspective and in conjunction with what are in trend in the other half of the world.

Lastly, for researchers, to further study the effect of Facebook and social media and networks as tools for political campaigns. It is furthermore recommended that they implore more sophisticated statistical measurements to generate a more objective and empirical study of the phenomena later on. Another recommendation for them is that, to conduct a similar study in different political setting or may be a neutral setting without possible interference with the results as

witnessed in this study which was greatly affected by the upcoming elections. Lastly, it is further specifically recommended to conduct later researches that will correlate extent of utilization to political success and other relevant variables.

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