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Breaking the Fourth Wall: A Functional Analysis of Political Campaign Messages in Facebook during the 2016 Philippine Presidential Elections

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ABSTRACT

The democratization of information and increased exchange of user-generated content has attracted candidates to utilize social media for their political campaigns. This phenomenon has resulted in the internet becoming an independent socio-political system with its modes of interaction, procedures, and standards for political campaigns. Furthermore, the functional theory of political campaign discourse provides a set of content and theoretical functions of these messages to describe how candidates would differentiate themselves from one another in the course of campaigning. Applied in the personality-based Philippine political setting, this study argues that dynamic access to social media, from the ends of voters and candidates, in campaigning has led to a political environment conducive to populism.

As this study analyzed 548 Facebook posts of the five presidential candidates from April 9 to May 9, 2016, for the Philippine elections, it found that posts are dominated by sharing of personal activities and attacks on Duterte's unorthodox political rhetoric. Attacks have a high propensity to go viral on social media and this virality, for any political candidate, means gaining popularity among social media users. Hence, the findings are consistent with studies claiming that virality is the most concise and effective strategy developed in an online campaign. Thus, this study found that dynamic access to social media led to a political environment conducive for populist rhetoric that helped validate experts' explanations of Duterte's victory as a product of the underdog effect.

Keywords: Elections, Political Communication, Political Campaign, Social Media Politics, Online Campaign, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

A traditional live theater performance typically comprised a stage with three walls demarcating it from the audience. Espousing illusionism, the fourth wall divides the room between the stage and the audience. But on the onset of Enlightenment, actors recognized the transparency of the fourth wall and broke the boundary through directly addressing the audience. From literature to television and even video games, various media have utilized breaking the fourth wall to induce a more interactive relationship with its audience. Notably, this technique is not limited to the entertainment field. It is also widely used in politics, more specifically, during political campaigns as these candidates break the fourth wall to bring themselves closer to the people they seek to represent. And, one medium that has perfected breaking the fourth wall during political campaigns is the internet.

The internet was first perceived as a supplemental political campaign medium, but years of utilizing it for elections proved it to be much more. Selnow (1998) posited that it has become a “master medium” as it fed the desire for information through displaying text, photos, and videos, all at once. Furthermore, the internet’s features offered opportunities for audience adaptation and personalization of political campaign messages (Powell & Cowart, 2017).

Social media also allowed candidates to update voters on their day-to-day campaign activities (Pearson & O’Connell, 2010). With this, voters use social media to relate to candidates in a para-social manner thereby creating interpersonal interactions that boost voter preference for the candidate since they can “relate” to them (Powell, Richmond & Williams, 2011).

In the Philippine setting, Aguirre (2017) studied the relationship between social media usage and election campaigning of Rodrigo Duterte during the 2016 Philippine presidential elections. He claimed that the Duterte campaign team heavily used social media to mobilize supporters and to engage rival supporters and their candidates. He further claimed that the Duterte campaign made use of social media for organizing efforts, fake news, and online trolling. However, he suggested that there is a need to look at why the Duterte campaign succeeded in comparison with his four other rivals.

In this line of thought, this study examined the social media usage of the five presidential candidates during the 2016 Philippine presidential elections. More specifically, the study focused on their political strategies in using Facebook as a campaign tool. Using the functional theory of political campaign discourse, the study explored how candidates differentiated themselves with one another through the political campaign messages published on Facebook. Describing the nature of campaign messages added insights to the literature on the quality of information on the internet as well as its implications on the integrity of political campaigns and election culture in the Philippines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The multifaceted utilization of social networking sites has been understood as arenas for socializing in habitual activities with people and business entrepreneurs. With this, social media has provided a new medium on the participation of digital communities. More so, social media penetrated the landscape of politics, as it took its features to break the fourth wall through online communication and interaction. As the world of social networking sites gives people an arena for political participation, Facebook, Youtube, Google+, LinkedIn have become political tools that targeted informed voters and converted the disengaged individuals to be politically active in leading up elections and get interconnected with their respective political agenda (Skogerbø&Krumsvik, 2015). To fully comprehend how public officials utilized Facebook as their campaign tool, this study explores literature and research, tracing from political participation to Facebook as a campaign tool, to explain the unique modes of interaction on the social networking site Facebook, specifically on qualifying the social media behavior of politicians in their online campaigns.

Political participation through social networks

With joining bowling leagues as an example, Putnam (2000) explained that individual membership in civic organizations can be channeled to promote political participation. He said these social networks strengthen interpersonal trust and cooperation among individuals. It followed that social networks boost civic and political engagement that serves community and countries at large. Putnam (1995) stressed that social capital is a result of a social life filled with norms, built-in trust as well as networks, thereby enabling participants to pursue similar objectives.

With Putnam's conception of social capital, Bourdieu, and Wacquant (1992) defined social capital as the totality of resources that increase in a group or individual through a network of institutionalized relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance.

Castells (2009) applied the concepts of social network and social capital in his study on short message service distribution where he observed that "one message from one messenger can reach out to thousands and potentially hundreds as it proliferates through the network society." He added that network distribution is the key because the receiver identifies the information as coming from a known and trusted source. It is in this way that the wireless communication network becomes a network of trust where the receiver is more likely to believe the information. Castells (2009), then, coined the term communication power meaning wireless communication networks and networks of trust evolving to networks of resistance which "signals mobilization against an identified target."

The literature showed the evolution of the social network and social capital in societies. From membership to organizations, social network and capital have entered

the wireless communication means which have been effective in connecting an infinite number of networks virtually.

Political participation through social media

Through the years, wireless communication has not been limited to short message services but has notably evolved through social media. The communication power of social media had manifested the convergence of social network and wireless communication. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that firstly permits constant adjustment of content and applications by “all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion.”

Moreover, the internet and social media’s features lowered the costs of gathering political information and communicating about politics which leads to increased participation for the disadvantaged (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). Likewise, Krueger (2002) stated that internet skills have an independent influence on political participation distinct from levels of socioeconomic advantage. This suggested that increased internet skills of the population may be able to mobilize previously disengaged citizens.

These findings have also been proved by Shah, Kwak, and Holbert (2001) as they explained that the internet is an interactive medium which has the potential to strengthen the relationship among previously disengaged citizens, intermediary organizations, and the political world.

The internet increased opportunities for individuals to participate in civic and political discussions as well as to spread information (Dahlgren, 2000). Loader and Mercea (2012) claimed that social media generally enhances democratic life by providing citizens with new means to engage and deliberate on political and societal issues. With the emergence of internet-based networks, Benkler (2006) affirmed that this public sphere shall allow individuals to take advantage of capabilities that make them greater participants online conversations.

With Putnam’s (1995) assertion that social networks are positively related to political participation, de Vreese’s (2007) research proved that online social networking and interactivity with others help boost political participation. More importantly, this paved the way for a more visible “digital citizenship” on the worldwide web.

The lowered costs and increased opportunities brought about by the internet and social media enticed political actors as these studies demonstrated how social media have been instrumental in getting across a political message to larger networks and audiences. Thus, social media power, with a positive correlation on its use of political participation, magnified its relevance in politics.

As social media established its capability in boosting political participation, political campaign managers have also recognized social media as an effective way for candidates to engage with voters (Howard et al., 2016). For instance, data revealed that

candidate engagement with citizens on Facebook fan page had a positive effect, resulting in continued platform use. Continued citizen participation also had a positive impact on the politician.

With this, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) affirmed that social media is essential in the democratization of information and knowledge as it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. With voter turnout and political participation, social networks provided information about the choices of those to whom one is directly connected while mass media provide information about aggregate choice (Siegel, 2013). In the political setting, this democratization of information and increased exchange of user-generated content has attracted campaign managers in forwarding their agenda.

With the proliferation of means to obtain and send information on these social networks, Dutta-Bergman (2003) stressed that web-based behavior is classified to “goal-directed and experiential styles based on differences in consumer motivation.” Catered according to an individual’s social needs, Lueng and Wei (2000) added that uses and gratifications are strengthened with the mobility, immediacy, and instrumentality of mobile phones.

Indeed, the internet and social media provided an environment in favor of political campaign managers. The democratization of information and increased exchange of user-generated information led to media utility in campaigns. In this light, the personalization of politics rose to further strengthen political campaigns.

Philippine election campaign trends

Traditional television, radio, and print advertisements have long served as the primary campaign platform during election period, with candidates and parties spending more than millions of pesos worth of campaign money (Delli, Carpini&Keeter, 2002). However, due to increasing internet penetration, candidates have begun to invade social media as an alternative for political election campaigns.

According to Mirandilla-Santos (2009), the ills of the election process in the Philippines were rooted in the practice of spending huge amounts for campaign expenses, which gives leverage only to the rich or candidates with wealthy financiers. Perron (2009) describes Philippine campaigns as a fascinating mix of traditional patronage politics and modern high-tech campaigns. With this, free-market votes are those won through ads, billboards, images, and speeches while command votes are those delivered by local leaders in exchange for patronage, pork barrel and other favors which are often called political machinery.

In the 2010 Philippine elections, Facebook had seen a huge interest to engage and interact with the voters. Mirandilla-Santos (2009) showed that leading presidential aspirants all maintained a website and most had a Facebook account which foresees

that 2010 will see more cyber campaigning that implies a new phenomenon of political communication, campaign financing and strategy, and voter engagement. However, Mirandilla-Santos (2009) asserted that they do often use Facebook for their advocacies but shows little interaction with voters.

Still, television remained to be the main source of information about the 2010 elections and presidential aspirants. This means that Facebook is not an alternative, but supplementary to traditional mainstream media as an election campaign platform.

Fast forward to the 2016 elections, Sidel (2014) claimed that they no longer yearn for nice and polite candidates rather they would vote for a brash candidate who would give the best chance in forwarding change. This means that Duterte fit in to project the image of a tough-talking candidate in all debates and visibility on Facebook and other social media platforms. As a result, this fueled Duterte to reserve his most virulent attacks on Roxas and Aquino administration.

In this regard, from midterm to presidential elections, the opposition powered the political machinery of social media, big businessmen, a segment of the middle class, and especially the masses to sway voters. A trend in Philippine election, the opposition venture themselves to implement change swiftly and identified themselves with the masses across the section of society in the next election.

Facebook during the 2016 elections in the Philippines

The Philippines is considered the most “social nation” in the world considering its 41 million active Facebook users who mostly are millennial-aged from 18-34 ages (Jaboneta, 2016). In this regard, the campaign for 2016 Philippine presidential election saw Facebook as the best platform to reach a huge population with their goals.

From January 9 until May 9, 2016, it showed how social media channels such as Facebook became the middle man to a traditional website exposing the lives and campaign activities of the five presidential candidates who were Miriam Defensor Santiago, Jejomar Binay, Rodrigo Duterte, Grace Poe, and Manuel Roxas II.

Sinpeng (2016) found out that Rodrigo Duterte built the most engaged fan base. Though he did not have the most likes or comments from his posts, he produced the most numbers of “shares” from his online followers. In lieu of this, Ressa stated that Duterte hired digital strategists who helped him to establish his modest online visibility by creating multiple Facebook personalities and bloggers worldwide (Etter, 2017). His followers were called the Duterte Die-Hard Supporters or the DDS.

The plan was to set up a Facebook page that will be authenticated by a trademark blue checkmark to garner more followers. According to Sinpeng (2016), Duterte utilized social media apparatus together with the people unlike any other political candidate. The strategy simply relied on building a fan-based group of supporters based on the geography and OFWs to distribute the messages created by the

campaign. Furthermore, his viral video regarding the joking statement of an Australian missionary garners a thread of social standpoints (Jaboneta, 2016). As a result, throughout the campaign, Etter (2017) asserted how Duterte ended up in dominating the political discourses in Facebook in April, a month before the election, and this led him to become “Undisputed King of Facebook conversations.”

In contrast, other viral videos became the thread of Facebook. For instance, Grace Poe’s eligibility to run in the presidential posts was bragged by questioning her citizenship (Buenaobra, 2016). According to Dangla (2016), Poe’s engagement on Facebook was tripled but it still elicited low engagement results. According to Jaboneta (2016), the same scenario happened with Miriam Defensor-Santiago in which her youth-led campaigned for more social media visibility but did not click despite having an impressive online campaign.

A high number of Facebook posts, followers, and likes did not guarantee the desired voter’s behavior and attention. For instance, when Presidential candidate Jejomar Binay’s overpriced building went viral, he had the most active Facebook posts (having posted 509 times) but his fans were not enthusiastic with his online presentation of pro-poor platforms (Buenaobra, 2016). In another example, Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Grace Poe had the most number of followers and likes followed by Jejomar Binay, Mar Roxas, and Rodrigo Duterte as of April 19.

On the other hand, the twist in social media prompted a thread of conversation or making it viral (Dangla, 2016). Furthermore, Commission on Elections’ data showed that the millennial with the greatest number of registered voters at approximately 24.7 million were the most-active in election-relation posts or thread. Moreover, Calbaza (2016) insisted that the immature use of social media by spreading fake news phenomenon, unsubstantiated posts, and doing personal attacks against another political candidate became the mainstream in social media instead of engaging with political discourses of policy-related programs or the capacity of the netizens to promote political standpoints and setting public opinion rather than bashing (Dangla, 2016).

By definition, viral comes from the word virus which is a medical term that characterizes an infectious agent to the life of an organism (Bene, 2017). Applying it to the internet scheme, Alhabash and McAlister (2015) asserted that virality from a certain post or content made the individual user infected when they see the post. This means that when an individual became infected in a post, it spurred emotions to the viewer and more likely to spread using sharing and relating with others on how they feel.

Moreover, Facebook defines virality when the post receives more likes, comments, and shares (Bene, 2017).

In this sense, the engagement made by the viewers regarding the Facebook posts of the five candidates that went viral means that a certain individual may feel either happy, angry, sad, surprised, disgusted, dismayed. This concept of virality inflames the

topic on the rape joke of Duterte and the Muslim insurgencies issues to be the top of the most-talked-about topic during 2016 Philippine elections. Here, a series of emotional sentiments were reached and shared to people who were also affected or showed the same feelings as others. Also, Alhabash and McAlister (2015) claimed that the viral power on Facebook signifies a new platform that targets or trigger specific audience across the internet and sometimes serve as a source for news online.

Their focus on social media campaigning became vicious and divided that it polarized the nation given that the Philippines has one of the highest rates of Facebook penetration in the world with 94 percent of active Filipinos using Facebook. Now, Facebook not just became a tool but also a weapon for online campaigning.

Through the lens of the functional theory of political campaign discourse

William Benoit constructed the functional theory of political campaign discourse to analyze American election campaigns. Benoit (2006) stressed that political campaign messages are instrumental in persuading voters to elect a candidate to a political office. Benoit (2006) presented the functional theory of political campaign discourse to help understand the messages of viable candidates for public office.

Benoit (2006) posited that voting is a comparative act. This means that a voter casts for a preferable candidate, which, in his/her own opinion, is better than others. Since no candidate is perfect, each person is essentially deciding which candidate is more fit for the public office. It follows that candidates must differentiate themselves from other candidates so voters will prefer them over the other.

With this, candidates use campaign messages to make these distinctions manifest. Campaign messages may be relayed through candidate messages, news coverage, messages from other people and groups, and political discussion. Notably, all messages are tailored to inform and persuade voters.

Benoit (2006) emphasized that messages are in the form of an acclamation, an attack or a defense. Benoit (2006) defined acclamations as the candidate's way of telling the voters about his/her good points. The second function of political campaign messages would be to attack or criticize the opponent, to reduce his/her opponent's desirability. This leads to the third function of political campaign messages which is to defend, an act of refutation of an attack.

Benoit (2006) also recognized that campaign medium would have an influence in applying this theory, which may affect candidates' capacity to produce messages that acclaim, attack, or defend. In this regard, this study will apply the functional theory of political campaign discourse to another medium – Facebook.

Thus, this study posited that the findings would reflect the following: first, presidentiables would post about their past deeds, platforms, and campaign activities,

and second, the political campaign posts would function to inform and attack other candidates.

METHODOLOGY

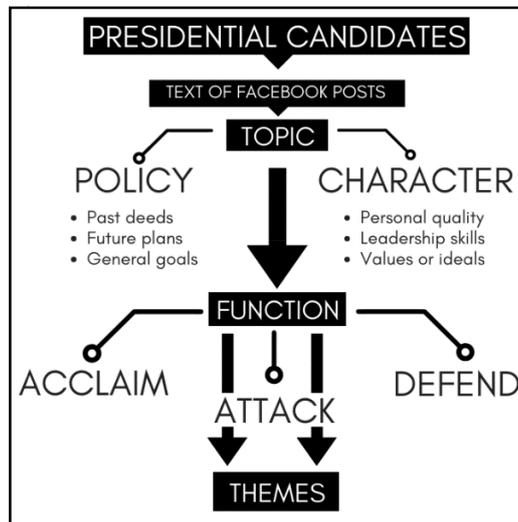


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This study continues with the presentation, interpretation, and qualitative analysis of the data collected to fulfill the research objectives. The study aims to describe how the five presidential candidates used Facebook as a campaign tool for the 2016 Philippine elections. Using the functional theory of political campaign discourse, the study explores how candidates differentiated themselves with one another by describing the content and theoretical functions of their posts. More specifically, the researchers posited that first, presidential candidates would post about their past deeds, platforms, and campaign activities. Second, the researchers assumed that the political campaign posts would function to inform and attack other candidates. To answer the questions, the researchers have conducted a qualitative textual analysis of 548 Facebook posts, published from April 9 to May 9, 2016, the final month until election day.

The posts underwent open and axial coding by three coders to generate the thematic content. The open coding entailed the reading and chunking of data to recognize recurring patterns. The researchers were primarily guided by the theoretical themes from the functional theory of political campaign discourse such as acclamation, policy, character, values, attack, defend, among others. However, the coders were also given the liberty to name additional categories as they go through the coding process to further enhance the description of the Facebook posts. Afterward, the posts were axially coded, which involved clustering of posts or parts of posts based on the frequent categories. As a result, one post may be classified in multiple categories depending on the result of the remarks of the three open coders. Finally, selective coding was utilized to arrive at the families of themes, to simplify and prevent overlapping themes.

Furthermore, descriptions of the content and function of the Facebook posts are supported by literature on a social media campaign and news articles on the 2016 Philippine presidential elections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thus, five themes emerged from the textual analysis of the 548 Facebook posts of the five 2016 Philippine presidential candidates which are: acclaiming the candidate, throwing attacks and defense, keeping the followers updated, reimagining Philippines, and sharing the personal.

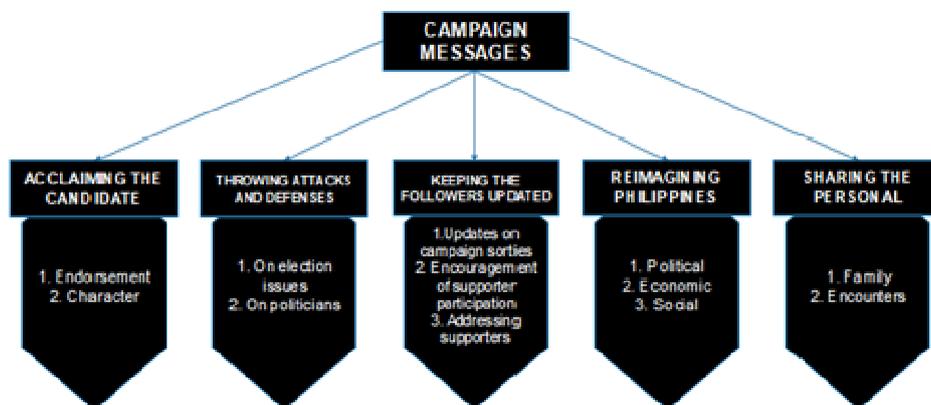


Figure 2. Themes

Acclaiming the candidate

In the functional theory of political campaign discourse, Benoit (2006) defined acclamations as the candidate's way of telling the voters about his/her good points. Thus, this theme pertains to the candidates' posts which portray his/her positive traits, qualities, skills, and deeds. According to Jaboneta (2016), candidates need to project their good points to acquire an impressive online campaign. Promising politicians' qualities are often based on skills, experiences, integrity, intelligence to develop trust among voters.

Endorsement

Acclaiming the candidate as a theme is further qualified with the use of endorsements, mostly with words of praise to show the candidate's good points. The posts contained endorsements from one's political party, affiliated party lists, musicians, dancers, celebrities, other congressmen, family members, and even former presidents. The presidential candidates also used their account to endorse their running mates. For instance, Paolo Roxas, son of Mar Roxas, was quoted saying, "Hindi perpektosi dad perosiya ay marangal, matalino, at masipagsatrabaho."

Endorsements also come in the form of mentioning the celebrities who participated in their campaign sorties such as the following, “Thanks Coco for being a true friend,” and “With the one [and] only superstar Ms. Nora Aunor.”

Endorsements essentially aid to rake up a candidate’s credibility because it represents recognition of a number of known personalities and political players (Easley& Park, 2018). It is also a way of targeting people sought to persuade, sometimes used to branch out to a new potential market. For instance, celebrities are a common target for political endorsements because their occupations have innate characteristics to reach a vast audience thereby adding leverage on the name of the political candidate (Easley& Park, 2018).

Character

Benoit (2006) referred to the character as the image a candidate wants to portray in terms of leadership skills, personal qualities, and values. In this discussion, leadership skills are used to demonstrate a candidate’s professional and educational qualifications. This may be based on their past deeds or recognitions received. According to Jaboneta (2016), the ideal leader for democracy must capture the essence of truth, sincerity, and practices of what he believes in. Thus, during the campaign, candidates seek to project this ideal leader of democracy, striving to remind the audience as a true mark of being a responsible politician.

A recurring pattern is an emphasis on a candidate’s capability to assert authority. In politics, the principle of authority involves the ability to exercise powers to curb misconduct or corruption (Christiano, 1999). In pursuit of projecting oneself as someone capable of materializing his/her plans in the government for the common good, candidates present themselves as a person in authority who is efficient in protecting democratic liberties.

Through narratives, both Duterte and Santiago cited their past experiences with the New People’s Army and a hostage-taking respectively, where they claimed to have asserted authority. For instance, Santiago posted, “The hostage-taker then surrendered his hand grenade to the Ilongga senator and released the hostages.”

Others also portrayed to be skilled in good governance through citing their track record and recognition from prestigious award-giving bodies. Binay, for example, cited his years in public service and programs he implemented as Mayor in Makati. Furthermore, Santiago posted a quote from the PiliPinas debate saying, “Binigyan ako ng prestigious Magsaysay Award for Government Service, for bold and moral leadership in cleaning up a corrupt government agency.” Quite notably, Santiago used her college degree and alma mater as a hook for locations of her sorties.

Dangla (2016) recognized the importance of track record and educational background of a political candidate as aids a voter’s preference. Moreover, it increases

credibility to promote good governance and induce responsibility towards public service. These professional and educational qualifications also fit Jaboneta's (2016) qualities of promising politicians' qualities which are indicators to develop trust and integrity among voters.

As to portrayal of their personal qualities, the recurring traits they used to describe themselves, especially the type of leader they include: honesty, religiosity, meritocratic, inclusive, helpful, understanding, servant and a good listener, among others. The candidates showed their assertive character by publishing rhetoric on claiming the presidency. The most dominant focus was on determination, transparency, cooperation, and pro-human rights.

The candidates injected the value of transparency on outrightly saying that he/she will not receive kickbacks when elected, and using the issue calling for the public disclosure of candidates' bank records. For instance, in one of Duterte's posts, "Showed his passbooks issued by the Bank of the Philippine Islands and answered questions from the media."

In addition, all candidates tackled human rights, marking themselves as pro-women, pro-life and pro-people. Tackling gender equality issues develops a mindset of innovative growth in society (UN Women, 2014). This issue has a higher appeal in the Philippines, which was 8th in the world and 1st in Asia, based on the Global Gender Gap Report in 2016. This helps explain why Poe, for instance, related her experience as a mother in forwarding her pro-women's rights stance: "Jhessa, ikaw ang dahilan kung bakit ako naririto. Dahil ako ay may anak na katulad mo din. Nakatitiyak kayo na ipaglalaban ko ang karapatan ng mga kababaihan hanggang makakaya ko."

Throwing attacks and defenses

According to Benoit (2006), attacks are used to criticize an opponent to reduce his/her desirability while the defense is a refutation against an attack made by an opposition candidate. Therefore, given the relational character of the two, this theme combines both and extends the attack-defense interplay not just to the opponents but to the election-related issues itself.

Notably, the posts categorized under attack garnered the highest number of post engagement, which includes likes, comments, and shares. Poe, Binay, and Roxas published attack posts on Duterte's rape joke, the statement on extrajudicial killings, rhetoric on dictatorship, his New People's Army relation, and issue on bank account transparency. Poe's post denouncing the rape joke earned 26,700 engagements while Binay's statement against extrajudicial killings garnered 7,276 engagements. Roxas' three attack posts on Duterte has earned 45,900 engagements with an average of 15,300 engagements per post. However, Duterte's attack post denouncing claims that he has paid supporters gained the largest number of engagements which was 127,000.

Factoring the number of their attack posts with the engagements, Roxas has produced 5 posts with an average of 15,000 engagements while Poe published 4 posts with 33,430 engagements. Thus, while Binay and Poe produced the greatest number of posts categorized under attack, Duterte has received most of these attack posts.

On election issues

The usual assumption is that whoever is the most trending in polls become the top voter choice. According to Scammell (1999), polls affect public opinion because these authenticate the political candidate and promote their personal brand or character. However, other political candidates see this as a front or a script of the social media to sway public opinion and in changing the voter's behaviors in selecting his desired political candidate.

This explains why this study's findings showed that candidates have attacked surveys on who is leading the presidential polls by discrediting them. For instance, "Wala nang naniniwala sa mga survey ngayon... nagkalat sa social media na inalis daw ang pangalan ko sa ilang survey forms." Another election-related issue tackled is the accusation of buying supporters. This code is prevalent on Duterte's page such as, "Hindi bayad at totoong supporters." Thus, the common thread for this code rests on election issues on the credibility of polls and supporters.

On politicians

The candidates have also used Facebook posts to attack their rival candidates and past government officials. Common subjects of tirades are Duterte's rape joke and bank account, extrajudicial killings, Binay's corruption case, Poe's eligibility to run and the rift between Poe and the Liberal Party.

Negative publicity works for worse or better. Negative publicity may stipulate awareness or increase requests of information about an adverse claim. On the other hand, bad publicity showing immorality may lead to a controversy. For instance, the uncut and unedited video of Duterte's rape joke sentiment was shared on social media tagged with #RapeIsNotAJoke (Buenaobra, 2016). As a result, this turned out to be viral in Facebook both as a sharing tool to proclaim that woman should earn respect, and as an attack launching pad for Duterte's rival candidates. The authors' findings prove this claim as Roxas, Poe, and Binay have posted and called out Duterte on the subject.

It is quite notable that the candidates consistently drop the names to whom they address their attacks. For instance, Mar Roxas published, "Tignan po natin ang mga isyu na humaharap sa ating ngayon, ang korapsyon ni VP Binay, hindi niya mapaliwanag ang bilyon-bilyong piso na dumaan sa kanyang mga accounts. At ngayon, ang korapsyon ni Mayor Duterte, hindi niya maipaliwanag at ayaw niyang harapin ang katotohanan sa milyon-milyong piso na dumaan din sa kanyang mga accounts."

They have also used symbolisms such as snake for the past government: Sabi nila sa pulitika maraming ahas. Pero para sa akin ang mga ahas ay hindi dapat katakutan kundi dapat intindihin.

Keeping the followers updated

Updates on campaign sorties

The positive contribution of updating during campaign involves the interconnectedness of the supporters in executing offline engagement and participation (Jaboneta, 2016). This has been proven to encourage supporters to join candidate's movements whether in a debate, campaigning cities or provinces, party event, rally to build strong conviction of hope and bond between them and the local communities.

Majority of the Facebook posts comprise updates on a candidate's official campaign activity. These include the location, number of attendees, announcements, live updates, and even the length of time supporters waited. The common characteristic of their captions portrays the massive public demand to see or hear the candidate. Case in point, Duterte's post stating, "Longest and most-attended motorcade... The much-talked-about mammoth rally of Mayor Rody Duterte in Alabang...Spoke before a huge crowd who patiently waited for him for more than 3 hours."

Encouragement of supporter participation

The posts also included encouragement of campaign participation from supporters whether it may be through printing their statement shirts or simply commenting on Facebook posts. The most active in this part is Santiago's timeline like, "Free T-shirt printing in the volunteer's headquarters at 3 West 4th St., West Triangle, Quezon City."

Jaboneta (2016) explains this as an example of a grassroots campaign which upholds mobilization of people to deliver advocacy and message. Through these, campaign teams engage people, attract viewers, and make them feel like they are part of that big advocacy. A grassroots approach for political campaigns is believed to have a higher engagement to widen social networks and social capital.

Addressing supporters

Candidates have also utilized Facebook to express gratitude and for voter education. First, candidates thanked their supporters and volunteers, usually promising to come back to the place.

In a study about candidates' strategies on Facebook as a campaign platform, the Pew Research Center utilized the use of the native language as a variable. The study explained that the use of native language in campaign discourses show a high level of

appreciation in the local community. This represents shared commonality between the candidate and voter to garner support at the grassroots level.

This phenomenon was present across the Facebook posts. Candidates consistently expressed gratitude using the native language of the place they visited. For instance, here is Santiago's message after one sortie, "Madamo gid nga salamat, University of Negros Occidental - Recoletos, sa mainit na pagbaton niyo sa akon. Palang gako gid kamo tanan!"

As to voter education, the posts included countdowns as well as reminders to vote on election day. These are usually matched with photos of the presidential candidate voting in a precinct. Although the correlation has not yet been proven, the Commission on Elections announced that the 2016 presidential elections recorded an 81 percent voter turnout, the biggest since 1978.

Reimagining Philippines

This theme pertains to the general goals and future plans of the candidates as expressed in their posts. These have been published in the form of quote infographics, notes, and simple status on Facebook.

Political

Their political platforms include having a competent administration. This has been demonstrated by emphasizing an honest, clean government, and clamoring for change and a "decent" Philippines. Another political issue they tackled is the assertion of territorial sovereignty on the West Philippine Sea. For instance, Roxas proposed, "Ano ang plano ni Mar Roxas para sa problema sa West Philippine Sea? Para sa China, dudulong tayo sa mga internasyonal na ahensiya. Para sa ating mga mangingisda, Cash for Work, 4Ps, scholarship, at Philhealth."

Economic

On the other hand, the economic platforms comprise boosting employment opportunities through addressing contractualization and for the pursuit of the return of overseas Filipino workers for good. The candidates also pushed for advancing technology while protecting the environment. Problems on poverty and transportation have also been tackled, with the candidates promising to raise the standard of living for Filipinos.

Furthermore, the state of agriculture has been prevalent across the posts of the five candidates, where they championed for installation of irrigation infrastructure and the rights of farmers. For instance, Roxas posted, "Kinikilalanatinangpaghihirap ng atingmgamagsasaka at ng kanilangmgakomunidad at hindikatanggap-tanggap para sa akin na kung sino pa angnagbibigaysaatin ng pagkain, sila pa angnagugutom."

Social

The candidates also reimagined the social conditions in the country by proposing policies on quality education, human rights, peace and order, healthcare and arts and culture. The human rights discourse revolved on defending the rights of indigenous communities, countering the rape culture and fighting against extrajudicial killings.

Case in point, Binay stressed, “This is about the future of democracy under threat by a man who intends to make extra-judicial killings an official state of policy. Walang hukuman, walang karapatan, walang batas. We do not need leaders who target children and the poor, all in their misguided plan to ‘eliminate criminality.’”

Moreover, much of the social stances were dedicated to the discussion of how to attain peace and order in Mindanao, condemning Abu Sayyaf terrorism and New People’s Army. An example would be Poe’s statement, “Ipagpapatuloy ko po ang usaping pangkapayapaan ng walang kinikilingan o pinipiling grupo. ‘Kung walang development, walang kapayapaan.... pangako ng Mindanao.’”

Sharing the personal

Personal activities of the candidates posted on social media either to heighten likability of voters, would result to perceived judgments or lower competence (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad & Gaffney, 2012). This theme talks about how candidates used their posts on family and personal activities to project themselves on Facebook.

Family

In a bid to portray himself/herself as family-oriented, this code involves mentions of past trips with family and greetings. It should be noted that the mention of past trips to a certain place is used to establish a connection with the place, prior to the campaign sortie. Moreover, all the candidates sent Mother’s Day greetings. Other types of greetings include the birthdays of Duterte’s ex-wife, Elizabeth Zimmerman and Roxas’s running mate, Leni Robredo.

Encounters

The encounters depict candidates’ status updates where they appear to have met individuals or group of people. Politicians have also used personal encounters to project a connection with these members of society. These encounters involve those with rival candidates, with senior citizens, with persons with disability, with indigenous people, with the Moro people, and even during Manny Pacquiao’s fight.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Applying the functional theory of political campaign discourse in the Philippine setting, the study sought to describe how the five presidential candidates used Facebook as a campaign tool for the 2016 Philippine presidential elections. The findings show that they have utilized Facebook to deliver their varying campaign messages to relay to their social media audience.

Consistent with the theory, the study assumed that presidential candidates would post about their past deeds, platforms, and campaign activities. The themes generated, such as acclaiming the candidate, keeping the followers updated, and reimagining the Philippines, affirm this assumption.

It should be highlighted that, apart from the theoretical themes, the study discovered that the 2016 Philippine campaign discourse also had sharing of personal activities. This showed the personalistic characteristic of Philippine election culture, distinct from the past election studies to which the theory was applied. This study has provided new insights into the theory's prediction power as applied to Facebook and the Philippines.

What is notable in this study is that the posts categorized under attack garnered the highest number of post engagement, which includes likes, comments, and shares. Poe, Binay, and Roxas published attack posts on Duterte's offline rhetoric. Moreover, Poe and Binay were found to have published the greatest number of attack posts while Duterte has been the end receivers of such attacks. Thus, these findings justify the second assumption that the political campaign posts would function to inform and attack other candidates. Echoing the functional theory of political campaign discourse, the findings demonstrated how they differentiated themselves with one another in the theme throwing attacks and defenses. Attacks have a high propensity to go viral on social media and this virality, for the political candidate, means gaining popularity among social media users. Hence, aside from sharing mechanism tools and other Facebook features for engagement, virality has become the most concise and effective strategy developed in an online campaign because it helps to leverage candidate's popularity and boost his mode of campaigns online (Dangla, 2016).

Therefore, as a campaign tool, the five presidential candidates used Facebook mostly to attack their fellow rivals. As to qualifying the political discourse in Facebook, this shows that attacking one another has been another type of entertainment and campaign strategy in Philippine campaign politics. Moreover, Duterte as the common denominator and prime receiver among these attacks further validate experts' explanation of his victory as product of the underdog effect.

These five themes qualify the political campaign discourse during the 2016 presidential campaign season. Furthermore, it described the trajectory of Facebook

posts of the candidates in the last month until election day. Under the lens of the functional theory of political campaign discourse, all these show that the five presidential candidates used Facebook and its features to project their good points, speak against issues, and update their campaign trail and personal lives, in pursuit of breaking the fourth wall and reaching out to more voters.

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