

DIGITAL PUBLIC PULSE

2022 PHILIPPINE GENERAL ELECTIONS

RESEARCH REPORT



Jon Benedik A. Bunquin, MA
Fatima Gaw, MDCC
Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo, PhD
Fernando dIC. Paragas, PhD
Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual, PhD

Philippine Media Monitoring Laboratory

Department of Communication Research
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines, Diliman

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Recommended citation:

Bunquin, J.B., Gaw, F., Baldo-Cubelo, J.T., Paragas, F., & San Pascual, M.R. (2022). *Digital Public Pulse: 2022 Philippine General Elections*. Philippine Media Monitoring Laboratory, College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Digital Public Pulse (DPP) project is a pioneering, interdisciplinary media monitoring collaboration that inquires about the intersection of digital publics, social networks, and media convergence. This report presents the findings from its investigation of the public networks, conversations, and interactions of social media users about and related to the 2022 Philippine General Elections.

Through a multi-method research design using network analysis, textual analysis, and computational methods, the research maps the contours and characterizes the textures of the Philippine digital public sphere engaged and entangled in discourses about the 2022 Philippine General Elections.

It covers the election year from May 2021 to May 2022 across major social media platforms in the Philippines – Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – using publicly available data collected and analyzed through various tools. This longitudinal and cross-platform scope ensures the reliability and integrity of our findings, given the partial and contingent nature of digital data.

The DPP adapts and appropriates analytical frameworks across communication and media studies, social sciences, and data science to understand the interplay of networks, discourses, and technologies in shaping political realities within and beyond digital media platforms. In the process, the study was able to surface indicators of these political realities being manipulated and manufactured to achieve specific political gains. Special research reports that take a deep dive into activities deemed to advance political manipulation are included in this report.

The report presents recommendations for government, media, civil society, platform companies, academics, and the public on their role post-election and in the upcoming elections to protect and uphold Philippine democracy and to demand accountability from those that undermine it within and beyond digital platforms.

5 key findings
**on election
networks**



Mainstream media's towering influence diminishes, gets confined to certain publics

News media remains a dominant actor in the network across the three platforms, but they have been declining in their level of influence and losing their distinction further into the election year. Their reach is increasingly limited to news-reading publics, and their gatekeeping function is bypassed by politicians and political actors who directly engage publics via social media. Partisan communities prefer particular news sources and distance themselves from mainstream news media.

Emerging political intermediaries are the new agenda-setters

Non-traditional political actors on social media such as influencers, content creators, 'native' social media accounts, and ordinary users have not only been central in facilitating political discourse but in advancing political agenda within election networks. They use their knowledge of platform affordances and algorithms and their stature within digital cultures to frame social issues, promote partisan narratives, and launch political attacks. They co-exist with traditional intermediaries in both synergistic and antagonistic ways.

Political building massive and multiple communities enables political turfing

Marcos Jr. dominated the digital public sphere through the emergence of 'superclusters' and 'multi-clusters'. This consolidation of existing communities with aligned political affinities (e.g., Duterte-aligned communities) on Facebook, and cultivation of distinct but politically complementary interest clusters on YouTube have made these platforms his political stronghold. These communities appear ad hoc but are a result of strategic cooperative relations and accumulation of social and economic capital online.

'Gray' actors and communities mediate political discourse

Obfuscated actors with ambiguous and untraceable identities and political affiliations are documented to actively partake in political discourse. These 'non-political' actors have also formed a distinct community within the election, ranging from 'hugot' pages, meme accounts, to entertainment, gaming, and vlogging accounts. While their political interlocution requires further investigation, their obscure character evades scrutiny conducive to unscrupulous activities.

Celebritized politics supersedes civic politics

Entertainment personalities, media, and fandoms in the network exhibit a particular brand of influence that bridges politically distanced or disinterested audiences to political affairs, particularly in making celebrities out of politicians. While entertainment actors and groups remain central to the discourse for the entirety of the election year, civic organizations and progressive groups are scarce, if not absent, in major communities in the network.

3 key findings
**on election
discourses**



Political legitimation is personality-activated

Political legitimation in social media remains mainly about personalities in a self-reinforcing cycle. Regardless of efforts to infuse issue-based discussions relevant to the elections, the intensity of scrutiny remains limited to the profiling of political actors' traits, values, and lineage. How the country can be governed and transformed is assessed primarily on how individual leaders can stir new directions, rather than how the collective can change societal structures.

Political legitimation is “proof”-compelled

The culture of rationalization persists in election discourses in social media as “proof”-compelled political legitimation subsists in election talk. As elections are popularly viewed as a rational exercise, communities of support are driven to provide *resibo* or evidence to legitimize the potency of their candidates. Data revealed how uncontextualized content can also be taken as evidence and historical proof. The creation of content appropriating embodied witnessing and historical truths has been maximized.

Political legitimation is highly polarized

All three platforms have ample room for political polarization. As the elections drew nearer, the dichotomy between the “reds” and the “pinklawans” became increasingly more pronounced. The act of choosing among potential leaders became too dangerous to be simply disengaged, calm, or even neutral. Even when there were supposedly third and fourth options, the overall tone of legitimation suggested a very limiting either-or choice between two major camps. Given the many options presented, the highly polarized political legitimation ironically authorized only two poles of rather complex issues the country needs to confront.

4 key findings
**on political
manipulation**



Inappropriate use of scientific tools can lead to misinformation

The emergence of the video genre of *'kalye survey'* on YouTube illustrates how the misuse and non-compliance to the standards of survey practice can be manipulative and may lead its viewers to believe in its unreliable and inaccurate results. Evidence indicates that the *kalye surveys* analyzed tend to introduce bias through arbitrary, inconsistent, and at times, partisan manner of asking questions. The *kalye surveys* are also non-representative and present sweeping claims in their results that are not supported by fair and conclusive data.

Political participation is suppressed through depoliticization

Political discourse within Facebook groups is increasingly *depoliticized*, wherein political choice cannot be enacted without the free social spaces and with the imposition of constraints to conduct deliberation. Conversations within these groups indicate the manifestation of depoliticization, such as forcing absolute truths and false binaries, resigning to being apolitical, or to the transcendent, overreliance on singular witness accounts.

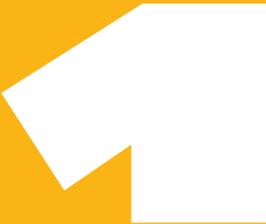
Political messaging is 'cloaked' in non-political pages

There is a clear pattern of non-political pages involved in political activities and conversations on Facebook, exhibiting partisan, coordinated behavior and speech behind obfuscated identities. These seemingly neutral channels are central to the dissemination of campaign materials, political propaganda, and disinformation to otherwise disinterested and non-partisan audiences, without the scrutiny or accountability of named and official channels.

Ecosystem of hyperpartisan “news” sustains manipulation and disinformation

A distinct breed of online “news” channels have buttressed networked propaganda on YouTube by presenting themselves in the generic conventions of news while advancing false and manipulative narratives. Through the connective capacity of the algorithms, these manufactured “news” channels support each others’ false and perverted claims and project a highly partisan political world that can withstand and co-exist with mainstream news





C H A P T E R



INTRODUCTION

Digital Public Pulse in the
2022 Philippine General Elections

BACKGROUND

With over 92M Filipinos on social media, social media platforms have become primary sources of news, information, and knowledge in the Philippines (DataReportal, 2022). Its accessibility, interactivity, and inclusivity to all forms of communication, expression, and discussion have expanded users' information horizons beyond those offered by legacy media. While broadcast media such as TV and radio remain popular (Reporters Without Borders, 2022), social media is used by traditional media organizations and personalities to extend their reach, form new patterns of consumption, and foster renewed affinities with their audiences. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified people's dependence on social media with the restrictions on physical movement and hands-on experiences. Social media has become the de facto public square, from everyday social connections and routine economic transactions to decisive political discussions (Global Web Index, 2020).

These developments have positioned social media as a critical site for amplifying political information, constructing political knowledge, and participating in political action, especially during pivotal events like elections.





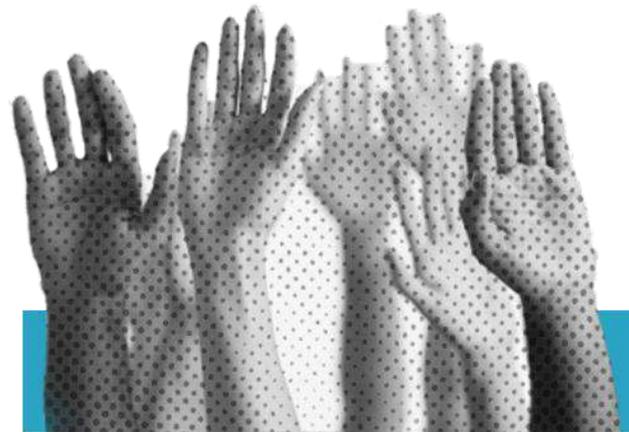
First, social media has given rise to new forms of actors engaged in political intermediation that displaces traditional gatekeepers like the media and the academe.

Political information and social knowledge can now come directly from governments, politicians, and anyone with vested political interests without relying on the mediation of journalists, experts, and institutions (Armstrong & Bucher, 2018; Ekman & Widholm, 2015; Mainka et al., 2015; Murthy, 2018).

Influencers have also emerged as political brokers who use their status as ordinary users-turned-microcelebrities to translate politics into accessible, engaging, and relatable forms to their followers. This category of political intermediaries ranges from camera-facing vloggers (Abidin, 2021; Lewis, 2021; Soriano & Gaw, 2022b), pseudonymous accounts (Ong & Cabbug, 2022), and alternative media channels (Gaw, Cruz, & Pineda, 2022; Soriano & Gaw, 2022a), which all have different strategies and tactics to advance particular political agenda.

Social media platforms as socio-technical actors also facilitate political processes through their governance architecture, recommendation algorithms, and content moderation policies (Bucher, 2018; Flew, 2021; Gillespie, 2018). Platforms configure the politics in the platform by privileging particular political cultures, incentivizing controversies and dissent, and tolerating unscrupulous behaviors that undermine democratic values such as press freedom and open political discourse (Massanari, 2017; Rieder, Matamoros-Fernández, & Coromina, 2018; Soriano & Gaw, 2022a).

Secondly, social media paves the way for participatory culture (Jenkins, 2012) where users engage in political and democratic processes from which they historically have been constrained to participate or structurally excluded.



Where mass media represents public opinion through proxy surveys and anecdotal reporting, social media enables members of the public to directly express their viewpoints, dissent, and grievances and disseminate them to larger social groups.

The forms through which political agency manifests when publics mobilize online includes a) the strategic use of social media affordances and network logics, b) creative and subversive political expressions, and public acts of c) dissent and resistance (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Bunquin & Gaw, 2022; Wood, 2021; Yang, 2016). The political empowerment of publics to participate in discussions and debates online has instigated national reckoning and global conversations about democracy, equality, and inclusive social change (Bunquin & Gaw, 2021; Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018; Papacharissi, 2015).

In the Philippines, social media has become the locus of political knowledge and engagement (David, San Pascual, & Torres, 2019), as well as of political protests in the form of hashtag networks to demand government action and political accountability (Bunquin & Gaw, 2021; Bunquin & Gaw, 2022).

Thirdly, while social media has democratized the communicative space where politics is deliberated and negotiated, it has also become the breeding ground for disinformation, media manipulation, and political polarization.



Media has historically been used for propaganda, but social media has introduced new apparatuses of manipulation that have unprecedented global impact – ‘fake news’ accounts, microtargeting, micro-influencers, trolls, bots, etc. (Al-Rawi & Rahman, 2020; DiResta, 2018; Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2019; Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2017; Woolley & Howard, 2018).

Platforms’ commercial interests and automated systems inadvertently enable disinformation to thrive as sensationalized and hyper-politicized content which drives massive attention and engagement (Bradshaw, 2019; Braun & Eklund, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022a). It can be argued that they also intentionally promote deception and distortion of social realities by compensating malicious actors in the form of clickbait pages and hyper-partisan influencers (Hao, 2021) and evading accountability through limited and AI-reliant regulatory interventions (Caplan et al., 2018; Gillespie, 2018; Gorwa, Binns, & Katzenbach, 2020).

Less attention is given to political actors who capitalize on social media to manipulate public opinion and the whole industry of PR architects, hyper-partisan media, and troll farm workers that operationalize their disinformation and propaganda campaigns (Farhall et al., 2019; Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Recuero, Soares, & Vinhas, 2020). These actors employ agile strategies and creative techniques to game social media for their political ends by manufacturing political popularity for their political clients, defaming political opponents, and maneuvering political discourse, more broadly.

Scholarly research and media reports point to the prominent role of social media in the election of President Rodrigo Duterte in the 2016 General Elections (Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Robles, 2018; Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, & Arugay, 2020) and in the 2019 Midterm Elections (Eusebio, 2022; Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2019).

In the 2022 Philippine General Elections, social media is front and center and it is an eminent force in shaping political discourse and by extension, in influencing the political decisions of Filipinos. However, the researchers of this study argue that dominant election research and critique center on measuring voter preferences, political behavior, or electoral irregularities that are either agnostic of social media or espouse technologically deterministic perspectives.

Acknowledging the contentious history and complex contours of politics in the Philippines, scholarly research should direct its attention not on how ‘decisive’ social media is in the outcomes of the election, but on how social media facilitates the interplay of social relations among political actors, social institutions, intermediaries, users, and technologies that mediate political and democratic processes.

There is a need for a critical and comprehensive but nuanced analysis that is anchored on the events of the elections but focused on the dynamics of the digital public sphere, cognizant of the unevenness of digital access (Uy-Tioco, 2019), looming threats to freedom of speech (Joaquin & Biana, 2021) and covert disinformation networks in digital spaces (Soriano & Gaw, 2022a). This research report serves as the reference point for mapping the contemporary Philippine political landscape and understanding its prospective trajectories in a digitally mediated environment.

DIGITAL PUBLIC PULSE

The Digital Public Pulse (DPP) project is a pioneering, interdisciplinary media monitoring collaboration that inquires about the intersection of digital publics, social networks, and media convergence. In its first year, it traces, maps, and analyzes public networks, conversations, and interactions of users about and related to the 2022 Philippine General Elections across Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. It intends to generate critical perspectives on the Philippine digital public sphere and its capacity to configure power relations, social realities, and political cultures in relation to the elections.

It aims to answer the following key questions:

- 1** Who are the influential electoral candidates, political leaders and parties, civic organizations, political influencers, and - individuals in election discussions in digital media?
- 2** What are the salient and resonant election topics, agendas, and issues among different publics in digital media?
- 3** How do actors, publics, and platforms shape the character of political engagement in digital media?

By the end of the second quarter of the study, its preliminary findings also directed the researchers to take a deep dive into emergent indicators of networked political manipulation.

The aforementioned questions require the research to have the breadth to encompass the collection of actors, texts, and technologies constituting election networks and discourses. It must also have the depth to characterize the contours and textures of the emergent relations, meanings, and cultures from the data. As such, the research is meticulously designed to be responsive to the complexity, intersectionality, and scope of studying elections and politics in digitally mediated contexts.

Interdisciplinary approach

The research engages scholarly approaches from across communication and media studies, social sciences, and data science to account for the intricacies of contemporary mediated political communication within digital media platforms. Particular to this research project is the need for theoretical expertise on platforms, algorithms and socio-technical systems, conceptual knowledge of the Philippine political landscape, and technical competence to perform big data analysis of networks and texts that are unstructured, dynamic, and contingent on movements initiated by actors, issues, and events.

Multi-method design

Political transactions, relations, and significations transpire in multiple spatial and temporal dimensions online. The research employs a multi-method research design to study the manifold of modalities (e.g., audio-visual, textual, interactive), scope (e.g., actors, communities, networks), and interests (e.g., political influence, messaging frames, disinformation) that are both manifest and emergent within election discourses in social media. It moves beyond singular metrics and components used in mainstream election research to provide an integrated analysis of platform-mediated politics.

Cross-platform analysis

The research takes a comparative approach in examining election discourses and networks on social media by performing a cross-platform analysis across the Philippines' largest social media platforms. It recognizes that the distinct platform affordances, logics, and cultures of use configure the kind of politics facilitated by each platform, which allows researchers to both theorize the role platforms play in contemporary politics and identify the defining features of mediated political relations present across these platforms.

Longitudinal study

Elections happen in a day, but it is the social events and political movements that develop months, if not years, before election day that are not only consequential to election outcomes but also illustrative of the larger political, economic, social, and cultural forces at play in influencing democratic processes. The research collects and analyzes data one full year before the election day, from 09 May 2021 to 09 May 2022, and investigates the

changes and developments in election discourses and networks on a quarterly basis. It also draws its analysis based on long-term political strategies and cultural shifts that were previously documented by scholarly research and investigative reporting to provide a broader view of the relationship between social media and elections.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The research is the first attempt to generate a comprehensive and inclusive documentation of the digital public sphere in the Philippines, and of its developments during major democratic events such as the elections. Existing scholarly research works are commonly concerned with one phenomenon (i.e., hashtag, controversy, occasions), one concept (i.e., political discourse, social movements, disinformation), one platform (i.e., Facebook, TikTok, Reddit), or a combination of these.

This specific focus is deliberate because the vastness of digital media environments makes it both difficult, inefficient, and expensive to capture the public sphere online in its entirety. Epistemologically, digital data will always be incomplete and partial because (1) only publicly available data is accessible for research, (2) platforms decide which data to collect that is of interest to their enterprises, and (3) the data is limited by what is supplied by the platforms and what the tools can process.

Cognizant of the partiality and contingency of digital data, the researchers developed a methodology that pushes the boundaries of data sourcing, collecting, and analysis and employed triangulation by using multiple methods across spaces (i.e., social media platforms) and across time (i.e., quarterly and year-long) to ensure the reliability and integrity of our data.

This mapping of the digital public sphere is partial but comparatively extensive and exhaustive as it not only identified the dominant actors who frame and propel election discourses but also minor actors commonly

excluded from analyses of prominence, popularity, and permanence.

It also detects intervening actors whose intent is to muddy the waters through distractions, confusion, and manipulation. The researchers covered as much ground as possible to encompass not only networked publics (Boyd, 2010) but also those refracted publics that are 'below the radar' (Abidin, 2021) in normative research. Digital Public Pulse is intended as a reference point for future research in materializing the digital public sphere to its fullest extent possible.

The research also introduces new frames and constructs in understanding the dynamics of digital publics and their intersections with politics and platforms.

During elections, publics are often grouped based on normative categories based on their demographics, localities and sectors, and their likely political preferences and voting behaviors. Digital Public Pulse relocates publics as actors, communities, and networks in virtual spaces who exercise agency on their discursive interests and interactions, which may be influenced but not defined by their socio-economic position in society.

DPP also decenters the analysis of political discourse from traditional political sources such as politicians and the media to other political interlocutors who have established their own media platforms by strategically adapting social media logic (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). By doing so, the researchers not only trace the transmedia narratives (Jenkins, 2008) espoused by these actors that advance the political agenda across legacy and social media but they also examine actors' appropriation of and contribution to platform vernaculars (Gibbs et al., 2015) that ensure their visibility and resonance to each social media platforms' audiences.

With the Philippines being the 'patient zero' of the global disinformation crisis, there is a critical and urgent imperative for scholars to investigate disinformation, even more so during decisive democratic events such as the elections.

However, Digital Public Pulse takes a broader approach in studying election networks and discourses online and was not intended to study disinformation

specifically. While the research is cognizant of existing manipulative strategies and operational playbooks of disinformation campaigns globally (Al-Rawi & Rahman, 2020; DiResta, 2018; Heawood, 2018; Liu, 2021; Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2017; Woolley & Howard, 2018) and locally (Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Ong & Cabbuag, 2022; Ong, Curato, & Tapsell, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022a), the researchers engage the data not with pre-defined parameters but with emergent indicators of disinformation, propaganda, and manipulation emanating from the data.

The study's findings on new patterns of undue influence and its consequences on political discourse and democratic processes both help expand the boundaries of what counts as disinformation and deconstruct our existing categories of politically manipulative activities online.

Ultimately, the research intends to provide policy and program directions and recommendations for stakeholders to remodel their approaches in upholding election integrity, protecting voter rights and welfare, and advancing democratic values.

At present, the locus of policy development in relation to elections and democracy is within the stakeholders' respective fields and sectors, which are limited and already skewed to their normative perspectives and practices.

Media monitoring research like the Digital Public Pulse broadens the stakeholders' scope of knowledge by providing information and insights that encompass often uncharted, technically complex territories for the stakeholders. Given the declining trust and authority of social institutions, it also calls for stakeholders to be cognizant of their influence within digital networks as they themselves are emplaced in them. Their absence/presence and the significance/insignificance of their position within election and political networks inform them of the extent of work they need to do to regain or rebuild their social, cultural, and political capital. The research can provide insights on how they can expand their scope of influence to bolster the impact of their policies and interventions.

The research specifically intends to support key stakeholders by:

Government Recommending policy directions that take into account the changing political landscape in order to uphold the integrity of elections

- Media** Providing insights and criticisms on online media practices to recognize their impact on election discourse and public opinion
- Civil society** Suggesting entry points for organizations and sectors to promote their advocacies as key political agenda
- Platforms** Identifying election-related implications of current platform governance approaches that undermine or impede a free and fair election
- Academe** Identifying research directions and instigating methodological innovation in studying contemporary political phenomenon in a digitally-mediated environment
- Voters** Instigating conversations for a critical and reflexive engagement with political actors, content, and platforms that shape political decision-making

KEY CONCEPTS

The research directs the public's attention to the relationships emerging from the networks, discourses, and technologies that constitute the contemporary political landscape in the Philippines in the high-stakes context of the presidential election. We recognize the complexity of politics, while also being cognizant of the potential upheavals to the system as it is made precarious by the affordances, tools, and capacities enabled by digital media technologies. It should be noted, however, that the research primarily focuses on digital media phenomena and does not directly involve other elements in the political system that are exclusively outside of online spaces (e.g., physical infrastructure projects, local political brokers, vote buying).

Thinking about the elections demands us to shift our perspective towards being more inclusive on what counts as political, whose opinions matter, and when are the moments that breach the dominant power relations to open new pathways for the future of Philippine politics.



NETWORKS

Manuel Castells (2004, p. 3) characterizes contemporary society as a 'network society' where the "*social structure is made up of networks powered by micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies.*" Social networks exist even before the internet but it has been reconfigured by digital infrastructures. Using social network analysis as our method in mapping the networks, the researchers primarily regard the networks as a set of actors that intentionally or unintentionally build linkages with one another.

Actors

According to the actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), actors have the potential to incite a shift in the social relations in the network, not because they have the inherent power to do so but because of their association with other actors in the network. In the context of the election network, actors can be public accounts, pages, or channels representing people, organizations, and institutions, who decide the manner, form, and extent of their participation in the election discourse and their engagement in the platforms.

Communities

Communities are networks of actors within networks. They are also called 'clusters' to indicate that they are held together by connective substance or force, akin to communities offline with shared goals, interests, needs, or activities (Lazar & Preece, 1998). Twitter accounts replying to a news organization's tweets and to each other's tweets can coalesce into a community, the same way YouTube channels using the same issue keywords can be grouped together by the recommendation algorithm.

Social network

Networks emerge from the connections based on actors' actions and relations with other actors. The defining differences between communities and networks are their size (i.e., networks are larger and are composed of many communities) and their density (i.e., networks tend to be more dispersed and communities are more close-knit). In the study, the election networks are produced out of diverse actors who converse about sets of common topics (e.g., election, candidates, parties) and interact or relate with one another for a sustained period of time (i.e., three months to a year).

Each platform's network is categorically different from one another due to the inherent differences of the platforms' affordances and algorithms. Facebook and Twitter's election networks are interaction networks generated from actors interacting with one another, while YouTube's election network is an algorithmic network emerging from the confluence of data and metadata between actors and their content.



DISCOURSE

In most of his works, Michel Foucault theorizes discourse in the intersection of history, sociality, and power, and from their emergent relations establish and maintain a regime of truth held by the dominant groups in society (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1984). Media is where this system of knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and subverted, and thus “constitute by and large the space where power is decided” (Castells, 2007).

This positions the study of mediated discourse as front and center in understanding contemporary politics, and, in particular, capturing the complexity and multiplicity of discourse in digitally-mediated environments. The possible range of actions and interactions in the formation of discourse are enabled by platform affordances and prescribed by platform cultures, which can serve as tools to either restrict or emancipate people from dominant regimes of truth.

Text

Text refers to any print, audio-visual, digital, or hybrid material or trace produced by an individual or an institution that communicates messages and conveys meaning. While text can be a stand-alone artifact, its messages and the subsequent meanings of a media text is “always contextual, relative, and situated in a particular place and time” (Gray, 2017).

Social media texts, in particular, are multi-modal and multi-functional varying not only in the form of their content but also in their process of meaning-making from many possible standpoints (e.g., author, liker, commenter, sharer, moderator). In this research, the ‘political’ character of the text is emergent in its interpretation, especially since it operates in the context of the elections, when and where the political more prominently permeates social processes and relations.

Interactions

Rodney Jones, Alice Chik, and Christoph Hafner (2015) argue that a text in digital media is always subject to interactions “with other humans, with avatars, with algorithms, and with institutions” (p. 12). Interactions in the research manifest in discourse through the ways the researchers engage with the text, as well as in the traces of interactions that function as intertext (relationship between texts) and paratext (external elements of a text). For example, a Facebook post could be a shared post, carrying with it not only the comment of the author but relating it to the object of the comment, and arguably to the author of the original post.

Cultures

Discursive practices online come and go with changing topics, competing events, and ephemeral trends on social media. However, those that are adopted, assimilated, and normalized by users into everyday social interactions and spaces constitute distinct discursive cultures that prescribe ways of interacting and signifying with texts and social phenomena. These cultures become sites of representation, production, consumption, regulation, and identity creation (Hall, 1997) and they become the anchors of our shared meaning-making.

The research interrogates the interaction between political cultures and digital cultures that underpin the construction of discourse related to the elections, cognizant of its local contours in the Philippines and the global character of digital platforms. These cultures are not mutually exclusive as politics is increasingly mediatized by digital media and new and emerging cultures are born out of this convergence.



Digital technology is the most pervasive infrastructure in contemporary society that performs a ‘world-making’ (Plantin & Punathambekar, 2019) role by the ways it configures the order, standards, and pathways that users of digital media have to follow and navigate to perform their tasks and attain their goals.

This research primarily refers to social media platforms as the socio-technical infrastructures where actors are embodied and discourses materialize. As much as infrastructure is about technology, it is also about the social relations that emerge out of humans interacting with social media platforms that shape what the platform is and what it could be. As such, it is important to take into account the platform cultures in our analysis, as documented, examined, and theorized by scholars across the globe.

Affordances

Affordances are what objects on social media “might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, (and) forbid” (Latour, 2005, p. 72) users to do within the platform. They refer to the possibilities of actions, functions, and constraints presented by social media artifacts and interfaces to users. They come in many forms – conditional, material, imagined, and vernacular (Bucher & Helmond, 2017).

The Facebook share button is a key affordance in our research as it allows users to share a post from a source to their network, the same way Twitter has the retweet function to amplify someone’s post. However, affordances are platform-specific such that retweets might indicate endorsement and sharing can be more of an open-ended action (e.g., sharing a post containing false information to fact-check it).

Platform vernaculars

Platforms may have similar affordances but what practices emerge from them are characterized by the concept of platform vernaculars. Gibbs and colleagues (2015, pp. 257) define platform vernaculars as “unique combination of styles, grammars, and logics” that constitute the popular genre of communication.

In other words, they are cultural practices shared by a significant number of users and have been associated with the platform’s character. For example, formats like memes and quote cards are generally native to Facebook, while vlogging and how-to videos are popular genres on YouTube.

Algorithms

The enormous volume of data circulating in social media requires an automated system to package these into coherent, intelligible, and useful information. Social media algorithms perform this function by organizing, manipulating, and interpreting data through complex mathematical procedures “to expose some truth or tendency about the world” (Striphas, 2015, p. 405). This makes them ‘ontological structures’ (Finn, 2017) from which to perceive and understand the world.

Algorithms determine what you see in your news feed, what content is recommended to you, and which people are you most likely to be interacting with. However, the influence of algorithms is ‘invisible’ in our data despite its central role in mediating our political experiences. The researchers take a relational approach in taking into account social media algorithms by drawing from existing works about algorithmic logics (Bucher, 2018; Cohn, 2019; Gaw, 2022; Rieder et al., 2018) and interrogating ‘manifest’ traces in the data of the algorithmic processes at play in configuring political processes.



POLITICAL MANIPULATION

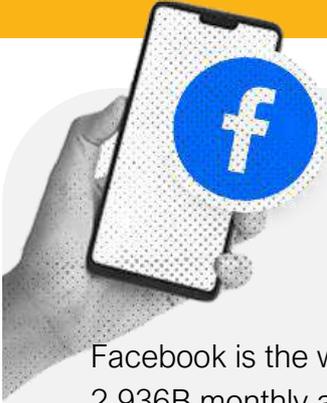
For our special research reports, we employ ‘political manipulation’ as a term to encompass diverse forms of deceptive, ill-intent, covert influence activities online that either inflict public harm or constrain people’s political autonomy to achieve the gains of particular political actors (Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018; Freelon & Wells, 2020; Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Woolley & Howard, 2018).

This includes the classical concept of propaganda, defined by Jowett and O’Donnell (2018, p.6) as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”; another related but distinct concept is disinformation, which is defined by the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Disinformation (2018, p. 3) as “all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented, and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit”.

Emerging manipulative apparatuses enabled and mediated by technology have also generated more specific terms to characterize the distinct form of manipulation pervasive online, such as networked propaganda (Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018) and computation propaganda (Woolley & Howard, 2018). Social media platforms themselves have adopted the term ‘coordinated inauthentic behavior’ (Meta, 2020) and ‘coordinated influence operations’ (Huntley, 2021) as a way to distance themselves from the academic concepts mentioned above and emphasize the technical attributes of disinformation and propaganda campaigns on social media.

While these terms have analytical differences in scholarly literature, the empirical evidence is more complex, categorically ambiguous, and increasingly indistinguishable from other native digital formats and genres. As such, the researchers devise more explicit and clear-cut terminology in each of the research studies featured in our special research to provide the nuances of political manipulation during the 2022 Philippine General Elections.

PLATFORM CULTURES



Facebook

Facebook is the world's most active social media platform with a total of 2.936B monthly active users (DataReportal, 2022). The Philippines ranks sixth in the top countries with the most Facebook users, with 86.6M active users (DataReportal, 2022). Facebook has been shown to be instrumental for Filipinos in the creation and maintenance of social ties, in the construction and reaffirmation of individual and collective identities (Cabalquinto, 2018; Caguio & Lomboy, 2014; Lorenzana, 2016), in the practice of collective coping strategies after disasters (Tandoc & Takahashi, 2017), and in the construction and promotion of government programs (Peralta, 2019).

Facebook has become the de facto public sphere in the Philippines, where people are exposed to and get involved in political discussions through political pages and politically active friends (David, San Pascual, & Torres, 2019). However, it has been mired with controversies, such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal that has exploited the data of more than 87M Facebook users. This made micro-targeting of voters possible, playing on users' vulnerabilities and predilections to influence voting behavior (Berghel, 2018; Isaak & Hanna, 2018; see also Schneble et al., 2018).

Politicians are known to take advantage of the affordances and networked design of Facebook, employing social media strategies and tactics to increase visibility on the platform and generate engagement, reach undecided voters, and potentially influence election decision-making (Koc-Michalska et al., 2021). Such strategies include the development of 'affective alliance' to followers on the platform, marking an emotion- and relation-based turn to political communication, from the traditional dissemination of campaign platforms (Bronstein, Aharony, & Bar-Ilan, 2018).

Such cases coupled with Facebook’s ongoing data privacy concerns, make it a potent venue for disinformation and radicalization. Thus, aside from understanding the content of political posts on Facebook, it is crucial to examine relational strategies and the dynamics of sharing and interaction on political information on the platform during the 2022 Philippine General Elections, as political actors attempt to dominate political conversations and influence public agenda.



TWITTER

Twitter is one of the leading social media platforms with 465.1M users globally (DataReportal, 2022), with 10.50M Twitter users recorded in the Philippines (DataReportal, 2022). It is a microblogging site known for its 280-character limit and its unidirectional network structure (Bossetta, 2018; Milioris, 2018).

The platform has been used by Filipino users in a variety of ways: sharing critical information and facilitating real-time coordination during disasters (Takahashi, Tandoc, & Carmichael, 2015), engaging in fan practices and culture (Bolisay, 2015; Cabbuag, 2021), expressing belongingness and intimacies (Lorenzana, 2016), and performing ‘alternative’ gender identities (Cao, 2021), among others.

The affordances of Twitter have redefined digital media into interactive spaces where users can participate in ongoing conversations and debates a networked structure. Locally, we have seen this with trending hashtags #MassTestingPH during the pandemic and #ArawNgMaganakaw in response to the legislation to commemorate the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. (Bunquin & Gaw, 2022; Gaw & Bunquin, 2021).

Nonetheless, Twitter’s networked structure is continuously exploited by political actors aiming to shape public discourse (Jungherr, 2014). Populist leaders are known to employ various communicative strategies in their Twitter activities (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Van Kessel & Castelein, 2016). In the 2022 Philippine General Elections, we anticipate different actors to compete in the election discourse to forward agendas.

Thus, it is imperative to study the networks of actors on Twitter, to reveal key players in the election discourse, and identify the ways by which they coordinate, disseminate, and influence online conversations.



YouTube

YouTube is the world's most popular video streaming site with 2.56B users globally (DataReportal, 2022), owned by tech conglomerate *Alphabet*. It is a key social media platform in the Philippines with over 56.5M Filipino active users, and it has become the go-to news and information source (DataReportal, 2022). Soriano and Cabalquinto (2022) have written thoroughly about the pervasiveness of YouTube in the lives of Filipinos, embodied in the videos that illustrate how they navigate their hybrid identities, mediated intimacies, their world-class labor, and political aspirations.

YouTube has moved from being a cultural force in shaping everyday digital cultures to a 'political influencer' (Lewis, 2021; Sucio, 2019) in facilitating political discourse from its millions of news, political, partisan, and hyper-partisan videos. Politicians and ideological movements have used the platform to advance their political agenda through intermediaries such as amateur content creators, micro-celebrities, and hyper-partisan 'news' channels (Finlayson, 2020; Laaksonen, Pantti, & Titley, 2020; Lewis, 2021; Litvinenko, 2020).

In the Philippines, Soriano and Gaw (2022b) have problematized the complicity of YouTube in enabling discourses that espouse historical disinformation and anti-media populism through its neoliberal algorithmic logics and inadequate governance policies. It is expected that YouTube will be exploited by political actors to meet their interests, potentially restricting discourse into hyper-partisan perspectives, distorted realities, and anti-democratic sentiments. While both the platform affordances and logics and the rise of different political actors contribute to the political influence amassed by YouTube, there is a need to examine their intersections as they participate in complex political processes.





C H A P T E R



METHODOLOGY

Mapping the digital contours and
textures of the 2022 Philippine
General Elections



OVERVIEW

Our research primarily looks into networks formed by the discourses on the 2022 Philippine General Elections. These networks emerge from the multimodal elements that interact in social media spaces and the relations that bind them. To understand the complexities of these structures, we employed a mixed-method approach, combining computational and traditional research designs for data collection and analysis.

Users involved in the production and dissemination of messages in digital media about the 2022 Philippine General Elections, and the election-related texts they produced served as the units of analysis in our research. We collected data from three of the most prominent social media platforms in the country, namely, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Aside from being widely used in the Philippines, these platforms also enable researchers to collect and analyze data through their application programming interfaces (API).



DATA COLLECTION

The focal points of the research are the election-related texts and the users who produce or disseminate them. Thus, our primary strategy for data collection utilized keyword search, enabling us to get specific posts about the elections and identify the users who posted or shared them. More than 40 keywords, classified under three keyword categories (Table 1), were drafted to cast a wide net in data collection, to get an accurate picture of the election landscape online. These keyword categories were:

Official election Hashtags

They refer to words preceded by the pound/hash symbol (#) used to categorize content and coordinate the exchange of information and bring content to publics outside of a user's immediate social connections (Bruns & Moe, 2014). These official election hashtags are crafted and employed by mainstream media outfits, as well as government agencies involved in the elections to disseminate and consolidate election-related news and information, while online users sometimes make use of these elements in their own content to get involved in discussions.

Individual and tandem names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates

These include official names used by politicians running for president and vice-president and the designated tandem names used by their respective political parties and supporters in campaigning for them. We also limited the list of presidential candidates to the front-runners, and those who were covered frequently by the media throughout the election year.

Political party names

They pertain to the names of the various political parties that field or manifest support for candidates during the election.

Table 1. *Keyword categories and specific keywords used in data extraction*

KEYWORD CATEGORY	SPECIFIC KEYWORDS
Official election hashtags	<i>halalan, halalan2022, eleksyon, eleksyon2022, phvote, wedecide, philippine elections, philippine election, 2022 national polls, election PH, ph polls, COMELEC, bilangpilipino2022, voteph</i>
Individual and tandem names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates	<i>leni robredo, bongbong marcos, manny pacquiao, isko moreno, panfilo lacson, leody de guzman, ka leody, kiko pangilinan, sara duterte, lito atienza, willie ong, tito sotto, walden bello, robredo-pangilinan, leni-kiko, marcos-duterte, marcos-sara, bbm-sara, lacson-sotto, ping-tito, Isko-Ong, Moreno-Ong</i>
Political party names	<i>1sambayan, PDP-Laban, Lakas-CMD, Hugpong ng Pagbabago, National Unity Party, Nacionalista Party, Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, People's Reform Party, Partido Reporma, Nationalist People's Coalition</i>

Data extraction was done on a regular basis, and scheduling was based on platform API limitations on historical data extraction. We used the following tools in extracting data from Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter:

CrowdTangle

This is a tool developed by the technological conglomerate Meta that has access to over seven million public Facebook pages and groups. The tool enables researchers to extract post-level data, such as date of posting, posting type, source of shared posts, linkers/sharers of posts, and post interactions. It also returns page-level data, such as page username, page description, page category, and number of followers at time of posting. Through Rappler, the project's data partner with approved access to CrowdTangle, we were able to extract needed information from the tool following the keyword search parameters designed by the DPP team. Facebook data collected by Rappler through CrowdTangle was turned over in December 2021 (Q1 to Q2 data), March 2022 (Q3 data), and June 2022 (Q4 data).

YouTube Data Tools

This is a set of tools used to extract YouTube video lists and channel network datafiles. The tool is developed by Bernhard Rieder, an associate professor of media studies at the University of Amsterdam and a researcher at the Digital Methods Initiative. YouTube Data Tools connects directly with the YouTube API v3. YouTube Data extraction was performed in November 2021 (Q1 to Q2 data), March 2022 (Q3 data), and June 2022 (Q4 data).

NodeXL Pro

This is a Microsoft Excel add-in that enables the extraction and analysis of social media content and networks. Developed by the Social Media Research Foundation, it connects directly with the Twitter Search API to extract nodes or vertices, or users involved in the network, as well as edges or links, or the Tweet posts, retweets, and mentions that serve as connections between users. Researchers are able to extract data until 7-8 days before the date of extraction; as such, extraction was performed on a more regular basis. To account for days that were missed in collection, we supplemented the collection with **snsrape**, a python-based web scraper.



DATA PROCESSING

Data cleaning followed three general steps: feature extraction, network extraction, and text extraction.

Feature extraction

The tools used in the research are able to extract two levels of data: user-level data and post-level data. Each level contains a set of features (or variables, in statistical terms), that can be used for analysis, and we utilized features that were relevant to the examination of networks and messages in the discourses on the 2022 Philippine General Elections, summarized per platform in Table 2.

Table 2. Features utilized per platform

DATA LEVEL	FACEBOOK	YOUTUBE	TWITTER
User level	page name user name page description country of admin	channel name channel ID channel description	user name profile name bio verified status website
Post data	message image text link link text description interaction score source of post	video title video category video description tags like count view count	tweet content retweets favorites

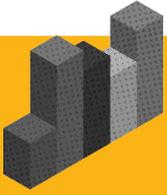
Network extraction

Facebook posts containing links or content from sources outside the platform were removed from the dataset. We also removed posts that were shared from photo albums, since tracing the original users who posted these photos was not possible without manually opening each link. In other words, we only retained shared stand-alone Facebook posts in the network. Network features were then extracted from the data by getting the user name and page name of linkers or sharers of posts, as well as the source pages where posts originated.

Data extracted from YouTube Data Tools and NodeXL were readily processed for network analysis. Thus, no additional processing was necessary for data from these platforms.

Text extraction

Text features (i.e., message, image text, link text, and description) of a Facebook post were merged into a single feature prior to analysis. Meanwhile, we used the video title and tweet content as the text features for the YouTube and Twitter data, respectively. In processing the text prior to natural language processing, we removed symbols (e.g., punctuation marks) and stop words (which refer to function or common words that add little value to topic modeling). Texts were also set in lowercase and translated into English using the Google Translate API.



DATA ANALYSIS

The research was divided into two components. The first component examines the digital election landscape by describing the structure of networks formed through election-related conversations, identifying influential actors in the discourse, and detecting online communities. The second component provides a closer look at election-related conversations through a textual analysis of content produced by users participating in the discourse. Each component contains a set of methods addressing their respective analytical objectives.

Table 3. *Methods used per research component*

RESEARCH METHOD	COMPONENT 1	COMPONENT 2
Network Analysis	✓	
Topic Modeling	✓	✓
Supervised Machine Learning Methods	✓	✓
Textual Analysis		✓

Data analysis was performed on a quarterly basis to capture the changing dynamics of the digital public pulse, but we also performed a year-long examination of the data by merging data points into a single datafile, per platform.

Component 1:

Network Analysis

We used network analysis to describe the overall structure of election discourses online. Network analysis is a method that examines systems made up of individual entities (called *nodes*) and the relationships among them (called *edges*). Founded on the assertions of network theory, network analysis looks into how patterns of

interlinking among nodes create an indirect relationship, “by which disparate parts of a system may affect each other” (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013).

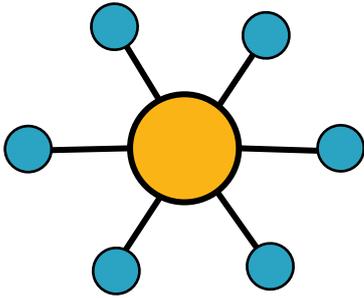
Our study employed a specific type of network analysis called *social network analysis* (SNA), wherein individual nodes are active agents, and edges are formed based on an individual’s node’s agency. In this research, nodes are individual users capable of creating, sharing, and engaging content on social media, while edges refer to content serving as the link between two users, as they share, engage, or become recommended by others’ content. Table 4 summarizes the specific elements on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube that were identified as nodes and edges in our research.

Table 4. *Features utilized per platform*

ELEMENT	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE
Nodes	Public Facebook Page Public Facebook Group	Public Twitter User	YouTube channel
Edges	Formed when one page/group shares a post by another page/group	Formed when a user tags another user using the '@' symbol as they mention, retweet, quote-tweet, and reply to them in tweets	Formed when a video from a channel is part of the recommendation list in a video from another channel

As in most network studies, we calculated global network measures, which refer to the metrics that seek to understand the network structure as a whole (Shizuka, 2019). Using Gephi, an open source network data analysis software, we calculated *network size*, which is the total number of nodes in a network, indicative of the number of users participating in the discourse. We also calculated *network density*, which refers to the number of linkages in a network, with respect to the number of nodes in the network. A more dense network means that a network is tightly knit, and information and influence can spread more easily to all members of the network.

Aside from global network measures, we also calculated individual network measures or node-level metrics which calculate how central or important a node is based on its position in the system. These measures are more popularly known as *centrality* and can be interpreted as “the contribution a node makes to the structure of the network” (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013). The following centrality scores were calculated:



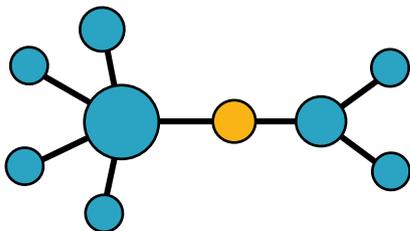
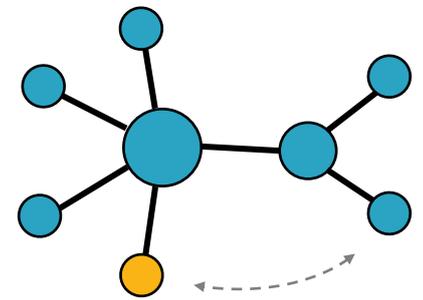
Degree Centrality

This refers to the number of edges of a node. There are two types of centrality: *in-degree centrality*, which is the number of incoming connections to a node, and *out-degree centrality*, which is the number of outgoing connections of a node.

Weighted degree centralities account for multiple connections between the same set of nodes.

Eigenvector Centrality

This is calculated based on the degree centrality of nodes to which a node is connected. A higher eigenvector centrality score means that a node is connected to “nodes that are themselves well connected” (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013). A variation of this centrality is known as *pagerank centrality*, which uses in-degree centrality to account for the directness of relationships in a network.



Betweenness Centrality

Betweenness centrality, which is calculated based on a node’s distance between other nodes in a network, is “the extent to which a certain vertex [or node] lies on the shortest paths between other vertices” (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2010). A node with high betweenness centrality is able to control flow within a network and can serve as a filter for nodes or communities (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013).

Centrality measures were interpreted vis-a-vis platform affordances and how networks are constituted. The table below summarizes the metrics used in each platform, as well as how centrality scores were interpreted:

Table 5. *Centrality score used and interpretation per platform*

CENTRALITY	FACEBOOK	YOUTUBE	TWITTER
(Weighted) Degree centrality	Not used	Number of times a channel was recommended in videos of other channels	Not used
(Weighted) In-degree centrality	Measures the number of pages sharing the content of a page/group; higher in-degree centrality indicates more pages/groups sharing their content	Not used	Measures the number of Twitter users mentioning a Twitter user; higher in-degree centrality indicates more mentions from other users
(Weighted) Out-degree centrality	Measures the number of pages/groups whose content they shared in their page/group	Not used	Measures the number of Twitter users with whom they engaged by mentioning, replying, retweeting, or quoting their post
Eigenvector centrality	Indicates that a page/group is being shared by pages/groups whose content are highly shared as well	Not used	Indicates that a Twitter user is being engaged with by other users that they themselves are being engaged by a lot
Pagerank centrality	Not used	Indicates high relatedness of a video as it gets recommended often in a network	Not used
Betweenness centrality	Indicates that a page/group is serving as a bridge to other communities	Indicates a video's location as entrypoint to other genres of content	Indicates that a Twitter user is serving as a bridge to other communities

After calculating global and individual network measures, we proceeded to community detection. In complex networks, such as those facilitated by social media platforms, the Leiden algorithm is used to identify communities with members guaranteed to be linked together (Traag, Waltman, & Eck, 2019), thereby increasing the interpretability of communities. Communities with proportions greater than one percent of the network were classified as major communities and labeled based on nodes with high degree centralities within each community.

To further understand the contours and textures of the network, we employed additional computational techniques, namely, supervised machine learning and natural language processing. To examine the actors in a network, we utilized classification algorithms using a supervised machine learning approach to categorize large volumes of users on Facebook and Twitter¹ into different actor categories. A subset of nodes was first extracted and manually labeled based on the following categories (Table 6).

Table 6. Actor categories per platform

FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE
1. Civil society	1. Civil society	1. Civil society
2. Entertainment media	2. Entertainment media	2. Entertainment
3. Politicians, government officials, and government offices	3. Politicians and government officials	3. Influencers and content creators
4. Influencers and content creators	4. Influencers, bloggers, and content creators	4. Politicians and government
5. News media	5. News media	5. News media
6. Other affiliation	6. Other affiliation	6. Other affiliation
7. Facebook page of political communities	7. Ordinary users	7. YouTube news and politics
8. Facebook page about other topics	8. Unidentifiable users	8. YouTube entertainment
9. Facebook page about politics and current affairs		
10. Facebook profiles of unaffiliated users		
11. Facebook profiles of unidentifiable users		
12. Facebook group of other communities		
13. Facebook group of political communities		

¹ Due to the relatively smaller amount of YouTube nodes, all channels in the network were manually classified

The manually labeled nodes served as the training set on which machine learning algorithms are applied. The training set is also known as the ground truth data (Yeturu, 2020), and algorithms learn how an outcome (output) variable corresponds to other (input) variables in the data, so a classification model can be developed and applied to other, unlabeled cases to predict outcomes. A training set thus contains input-output variable pairs, and in the case of our research, the output refers to a user's actor categorization as shown in Table 6, while the input refers to the various node attributes or the user-level information shown in Table 2.



To augment the textual attributes and improve classification, we identified the presence of words (unigrams) and pairs of words (bigrams) in a user's information using *Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency* (TF-IDF), which measures word importance based on how often a word is mentioned in one case, relative to its frequency across all cases. Identified important unigrams and bigrams were added as features or inputs in the classification.

To address imbalances in data brought about by the dominance of some categories, and the underrepresentation of other categories, we employed *data augmentation*, or the artificial increase in the amount of data by generating new data points based on existing data (Takimoglu, 2021).

Although common in real-world problems, data imbalances pose issues in machine learning, and models may appear accurate simply because they are able to strongly predict dominant categories. Learning from imbalanced data thus results in a biased and inaccurate model (Bach, Werner, & Palt, 2019). Random samples for under-represented categories in the training set were selected and augmented using bidirectional encoder representations from transformers (BERT).

Multiple machine learning algorithms were then tested in developing classification models to identify which one yields the highest accuracy. Three classification models were developed – a **Facebook page classifier** based on a *Stochastic Gradient Descent model* with an accuracy score of 92%, a **Facebook group classifier** based on a *Logistic Regression model* with an accuracy score of 87%, and a **Twitter user**

classifier based on a *Support Vector Machines model* with an accuracy score of 74%. Specific class precision scores are summarized in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. *Accuracy scores for Facebook categories*

FACEBOOK ACTOR CATEGORY	PRECISION
Civil society	0.97
Entertainment media	1.00
Facebook page of political communities	0.90
Facebook page about other topics	0.95
Facebook page about politics and current affairs	0.89
Politicians, government officials, and government offices	0.91
Facebook profiles of unaffiliated users	0.88
Facebook profiles of unidentifiable users	0.90
Influencers and content creators	0.83
News media	0.92
Other affiliation	0.92
Facebook group of other communities	0.85
Facebook group of political communities	0.89

Table 8. *Accuracy scores for Twitter categories*

TWITTER ACTOR CATEGORY	PRECISION
Civil society	0.86
Entertainment media	0.83
Influencers, bloggers, and content creators	0.88
News media	0.85
Ordinary users	0.60
Other affiliation	0.72
Political users	0.92
Unidentifiable	0.65

These labels were used to examine proportions of user categories in the whole network and examine actor categories that were influential in the network.

Meanwhile, we used natural language processing, specifically topic modeling, to provide a top-line understanding of the conversations taking place within major clusters in networks. Once clusters were identified, we merged this information with the edgelist containing the texts that served as the link between nodes. We then

processed the textual elements (see subsection on *Data Processing*) per platform and removed duplicate entries.

The collection of unique texts per cluster served as a corpus for analysis, and in each corpus, we applied the latent derelict allocation (LDA) algorithm to identify topics and generated five topics per cluster². Topics generated were interpreted based on important terms identified by the LDA algorithm, as well as specific texts tagged under each topic.

Component 2:

Textual Analysis

Our primary interest in this component was to describe how election-related actors, issues, and actions are being discussed by digital publics. Thus, our first analytical task was to identify which posts had election-related actors, issues, and actions in their content.

Three coders were assigned per platform to manually identify the presence or absence of actors, issues, and actions in posts. Each went through two rounds of coder training and pre-testing, and achieved an acceptable intercoder reliability score of 0.7 based on Krippendorff's Alpha prior to content coding.

Coders manually labeled a total of 5,400 randomly selected units per platform, serving as the training set for the development of three models: an **actor-classification model**, which identifies texts containing actors related to the Philippine general election; an issue-classification model, which classifies texts that contain specific election-related issues; and an action-classification model, which labels texts that have content related to strategies, actions, and movements of political actors related to the election.

Resampling, through oversampling and undersampling of data, was performed to solve issues in data imbalances, and BERT was implemented to augment data features. Table 9 summarizes the algorithms used and accuracy scores of the best-performing models.

² Topic modeling was performed simply to describe each community based on conversations taking place among users. Coherence scores and multiple iterations were not anymore considered given resource constraints.

Table 9. *Text classification models developed prior to textual analysis*

MODEL	ALGORITHM USED	ACCURACY SCORE
Actor classification model	Logistic Regression	0.81
Issue classification model	Logistic Regression	0.89
Action classification model	Random Forest	0.90

The models were then applied to the unlabeled data, and three datasets were extracted per platform to contain only posts that had an actor, an issue, and an action. To examine the specific actors, issues, and actions discussed in the corpus, we performed topic modeling and generated k-number of topics, based on the number with the highest coherence score.

Texts containing selected topics were then extracted. The selection of topics was based on the important keywords identified through the LDA model that directly mentioned an actor, issue, or action related to the 2022 Philippine General Elections.

From there, the posts were ranked based on interaction score (for Facebook), number of retweets (for Twitter), and view count (for YouTube), Intensity sampling was used to get cases containing rich information for analysis.

For Twitter, the top 30 retweeted tweets per topic per quarter were selected. However, there were tweets that were deleted, tweets that became inaccessible due to changes in the user’s privacy setting, and Twitter accounts that were deleted during analysis. Thus, only 717 tweets were recorded in the final sample.

For Facebook, over 11,746 unique posts were collected using CrowdTangle. The top 30 for each month were selected. However, similar to Twitter, 41 posts had been deleted or become inaccessible, leaving 319 Facebook posts for analysis.

For YouTube, 674 videos were collected from 10 topics generated using keywords for actor, action, and issue. With intensity sampling using the criterion “highest engagement”, the top 10 videos for each quarter were selected for the final sample. Out of the 674 videos in the sampling frame, a

total of 40 videos were used for the textual analysis. Still using intensity sampling with the criteria “data-rich astrays/strays” and “content found in the top 5 highest engagement videos”, nine videos that were taken out by either their owners or by platform content moderators were subsequently replaced during the initial part of the analysis.

We conducted a textual analysis of tweets, Facebook posts, and YouTube videos.

Due to the qualitative nature of textual analysis, we do not generalize our findings to the wider social media discourse sphere. Instead, our focus is to present the spectrum of occurrences for each set of thematic findings.

Many of the observations perhaps do not get as much attention as others, mainly because they do not repeat as often, but they are still worthy of investigation. Studying patterns from the dominant to the peculiar helps us understand the richness and complexity of discourses on various social media platforms.

The first-level analysis was an individual vivo or axial coding to generate initial themes. The second-level analysis involved vetting of these primary codes in several group analyses to challenge which findings strongly show distinct characteristics and which ones overlapped. Because the anticipated three major categories – actor, action, and issues – were not equally evidenced by data, with more weight observed in actors rather than in issues and actions, the third level analysis required a critical consideration of not just the salient aspects of data but also its latent meanings. This required back and forth processing among the research team members and an iterative process of confirming findings with data.

All platform data, considered as text in textual analysis, were examined through their many layers of text within the text: the primary social media content as text in the form of posts, tweets, and videos; the embedded text in the form of words (written either as caption outside the primary content or overlaid on the main text as in thumbnails or superimposed still or moving words); text as still or moving image; and text as sound.





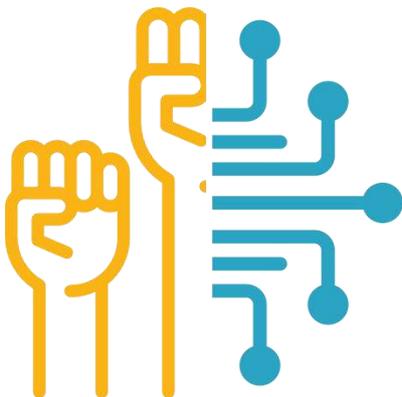
**Networked political
intermediation in the
2022 Philippine
General Elections**

Network, technology, and power

Network is the structure through which power is constructed, exercised, and distributed (Castells, 2011; Lin, 2001; Mützel, 2009). Most institutional forms of power are established and normalized through networks, such as government infrastructures, media networks, and institutional organizations. These traditional network structures centralize power to a few loci and enact this power outwards through linkages and channels of people, groups, and organizations.

Philippine politics harnesses this network power by animating family relations, political alliances, and economic ties that cement a few elite actors into decades-long dominance (Camba et al., 2021; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubín, 2017, 2020; Hutchcroft, 1991; Tadem & Tadem, 2016; Teehankee, 2018).

The rise of digital technology mediates existing network structures and forms new ones following its new logics and capacities (Castells, 2011; Entman & Usher, 2018; Munro, 2000). Networks have become decentralized, diverse, and dynamic, spanning global connections, enabling multiple agencies, and increasingly detached from social categories and material realities.



Technology then allows users to resist and challenge dominant and normative forms of power with the tools of digital networks. This 'counter-power' (Castells, 2007) manifests across digital platforms and spaces, from social movements (Bunquin & Gaw, 2021; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett, 2018; Trott, 2021) and political intermediaries (Kreiss & McGregor, 2017; Soriano & Gaw, 2022; Stier et al., 2021), to fandoms, counter-publics and epistemic communities (Mano, 2020; Utz & Wolfers, 2022; Zhang, 2016).

The mediatization of elections by digital media platforms set the grounds for major power struggles and shifting political relations. How entrenched social networks built offline maintain the power of dominant actors is contingent on how emergent digital networks are mobilized towards undermining the existing power relations and making way for new ones.

At the same time, the old guards of politics also exploit digital networks by leveraging their political economic machinery to contrive and engineer the network

for their political ends (Kendall-Taylor, Franz, & Wright, 2020; Schroeder, 2019; Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, & Arugay, 2020). While networks underpin a wide range of political processes, election networks are more high-stakes, time-bound, and open to transformation, subversion, and/or manipulation.

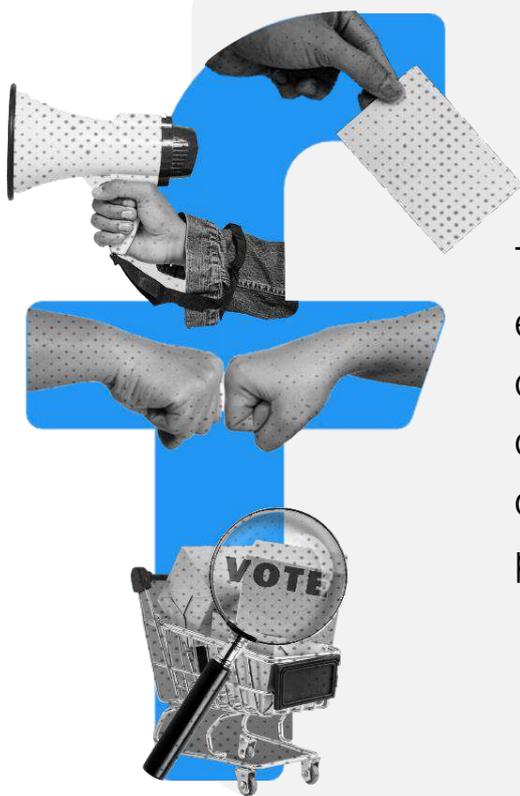
The findings discussed in this chapter are our attempt at mapping election networks across social media platforms to characterize contemporary processes of networked political intermediation in the 2022 Philippine General Elections. We identify and interrogate actors, communities, and other social formations that constitute these networks and their “structural capacity.... to impose [their] will over other social actor(s)” (Castells, 2007, p. 239).

While network theory engages the binary of power and counter-power, the discussion here illustrates the gray area where other forms of power materialize and discuss their specific capacity to shape political relations. Specifically, we provide nuances as to how power is differently distributed in the network contrary to the normative currency of power in the digital political economy such as engagement, popularity, and ranking.

Our analyses here are organized into platform findings and cross-platform findings. We intend to capture the specificities of platform intermediation and draw grounded analyses distinct to the platform infrastructure, governance, and cultures (e.g., Facebook as a multimodal sharing network versus YouTube as a video-format recommendation network).

By having the purview of networked politics across these platforms, the researchers also define underlying principles that shape the contours of mediated political relations. The research serves as a blueprint for election social media monitoring that is responsive to the complexity of networked political intermediation to provide grounded frameworks for political analyses, civic engagement, and policy development.

Platform-specific analysis



Facebook

This section investigates the election year actors, communities, and networks that construct the political discourses on Facebook for the election year period, May 2021 to May 2022.



General findings



Facebook communities were partisan

Facebook communities were partisan from the onset of the election year, exemplifying the political capital cultivated by the candidates or incumbent politicians on Facebook prior to the election. Facebook was specifically a bailiwick for Duterte wherein the pre-existence of numerous pro-Duterte accounts in various communities strengthened the campaign of the Marcos Jr.-Duterte tandem in terms of network breadth.

Marcos Jr. by himself was a minority in terms of cluster size during the start of the election year, revealing politics of convenience at work translated on the platform. The convergence of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte enabled Marcos Jr. to exploit the inherent political capital of Sara Duterte through his inevitable link with her father, Rodrigo Duterte. This empowered Marcos Jr. to be an invincible political actor all over various communities throughout the whole election year.



Presence of politicians' pages and partisan Facebook groups was palpable on the platform

In terms of network actors, pages of politicians and partisan Facebook groups were found to be the top sources and top linkers of information, respectively. This meant that partisan communities exploited content produced by politicians by sharing it to their networks to advance their agenda.

News media were also top sources of information but the top two politicians, namely, Marcos Jr. and Leni Robredo, superseded media outfits as a source of information from an election year perspective. News media organizations as a group of actors, however, composed the majority of the actors with the highest

weighted in-degree scores across all quarters, exhibiting themselves as ubiquitous sources of information in the network.



Non-political accounts were part of the election discourse

Non-political accounts which included interest pages such as gaming and comedy, as well as buy-and-sell and trading groups were also contributors to the election conversation. These accounts were marked by personalized campaign posts and subtle political content.

These accounts served as a gateway to more overt partisan campaign messages, e.g., posts with links to pro-Marcos Jr. vlogs on YouTube. Hence, non-political pages and community groups were cloaked actors that played an important role in disseminating political agenda to wider audiences in the network.

Global network characteristics

The election year network was composed of 126, 460 Facebook pages, public accounts, and public groups, and 911, 391 connections via content sharing. The nine major clusters which consisted of 78.15% of the network highly coalesced, wherein only the three clusters revealed apparent segmentation. The election year network visualization showed the three distinct clusters engulfing the other clusters and the presence of a ring of accounts extending content to the fringes of the network.

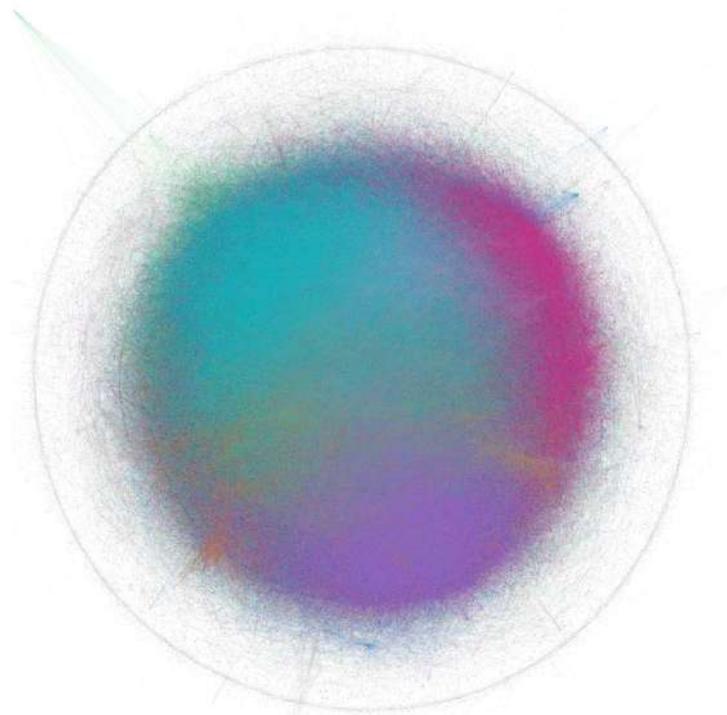


Figure 1. 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network, May 2021 to May 2022

Q1 network had the least number of nodes and edges among all quarters with 37,936 actors and 134,130 connections. The structure was characterized by a segmented center with two outer rings of small groups extending content to the fringes of the network. The central mass constituted the ten major clusters, which was 72.17% of the network. The network characteristics of Q1 were similar to Q2, albeit with a denser center because of a higher number of nodes ($n=58,654$) and edges ($n=274,393$). The least number of major clusters was noted in Q2 wherein six clusters composed 75.27% of the network.

Q3 had the most unique sharing network among all quarters given that its eight major clusters only made up 30.36% of the network. This was due to the slight increase in the number of nodes ($n=60,091$) but a 49% decrease in connections via content sharing ($n=137,758$) from the last quarter. The two outer rings of groups extending content to the fringes consisted of the majority of the network.

Lastly, the network in Q4 was segmented and had a denser center compared to the previous quarters. A slight decrease in the number of network actors ($n=56,998$) was simultaneously noted with a staggering 172% increase in the number of connections via content sharing (375, 449). The largest size of the major clusters was noted in this quarter where eight major clusters made up 85.05% of the network.

Figure 2A.
2022 Philippine General Elections
Facebook network,
May to July 2021 (Q1)

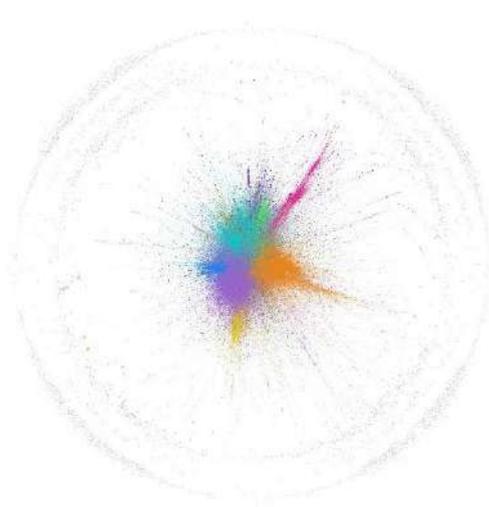


Figure 2B.
2022 Philippine General Elections
Facebook network,
Aug to Oct 2021 (Q2)

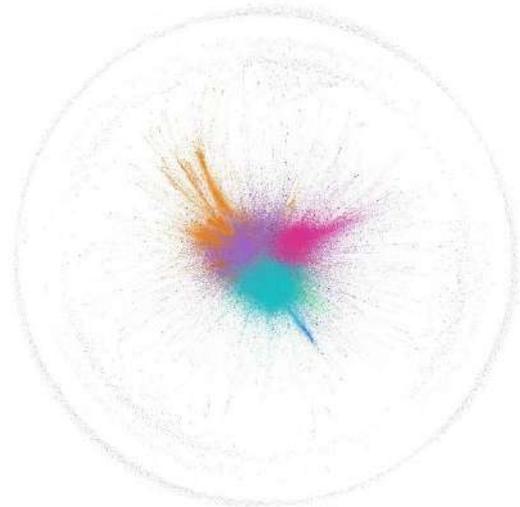


Figure 2C.
2022 Philippine General Elections
Facebook network,
Nov 2021 to Jan 2022 (Q3)

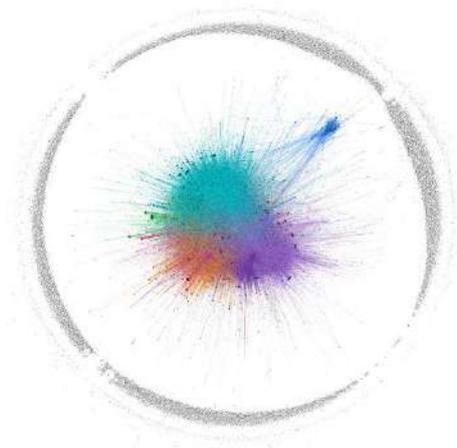


Figure 2D.
2022 Philippine General Elections
Facebook network,
Feb to May 2022 (Q4)

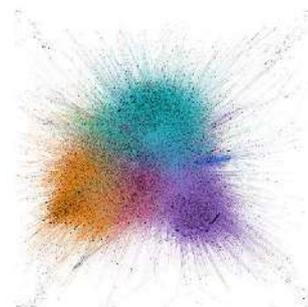


Figure 2. 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network
per quarter of the election year

Table 10. *Summary of global network metrics of the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Network metrics	Election year May 2021 to May 2022	Q1 May to July 2021	Q2 Aug to Oct 2021	Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022	Q4 Feb to May 2022
Facebook pages, public accounts, and public groups	126, 460	37,936	58, 654	60,091	56, 998
Connections via content sharing	911, 391	134,130	274,393	137,758	375, 449
Network density	0	0	0	0	0
Major clusters	9	10	6	8	8
Percentage of network	78.15%	72.17%	75.27%	30.36%	85.05%

Network composition

Non-political Facebook groups made up almost a third of the Facebook election year network (30.9%). These groups included special interest groups, hobbyists, sports, and other groups that were dedicated to posting and sharing content outside of politics. Facebook pages about politics and current affairs followed non-political Facebook groups as the most dominant actor category, at around a quarter (24.5%) of the whole election network.

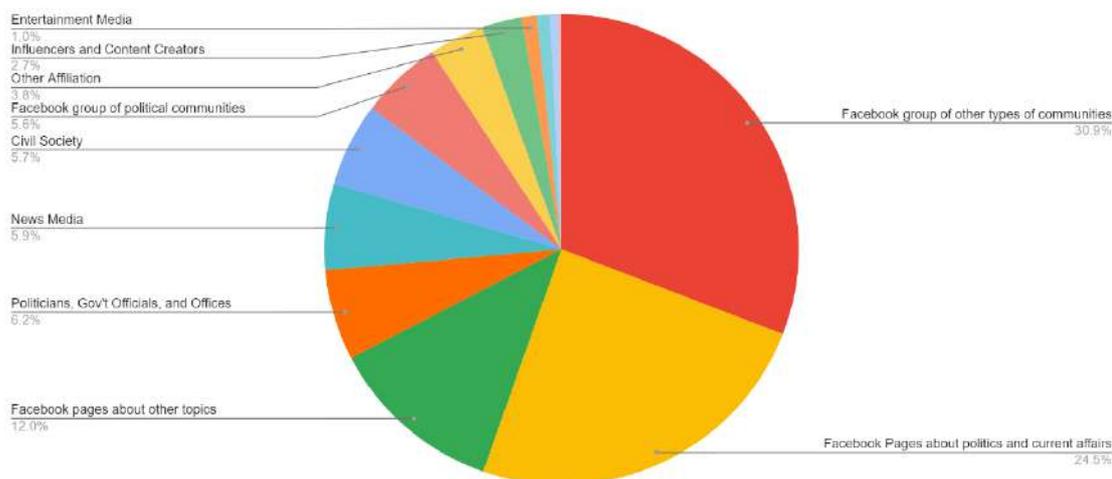


Figure 3. Actor category distribution in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Key findings

The Facebook network was generally consistent in the number of users engaged in political discourse across quarters, but there appeared to be a hyperdrive in interactions in Q2 and Q4 during key political events, i.e., filing of certificates of candidacy and start of campaign season, respectively.

The network was structured to have clear boundaries between communities early in the election year. This was evidenced by the lowest number of actors ($n=37,936$) but the highest number of major clusters (10) in Q1. These boundaries became more blurred in Q3 and Q4 with increased interactions between actors in those communities. The highest number of content sharing was noted in Q4, when the last leg of the campaign and general elections commenced.

Meanwhile, Q3 was an interesting period where the highest number of actors was noted but it was also when the major clusters only comprised 30.36% of the network. This meant that numerous partisan accounts were not highly connected to the major clusters thus remaining to be in the fringes of the network.



These quarterly observations depict how Facebook is a highly politicized environment where key political events trigger hyperdrive in interactions. Facebook is argued to be a platform for agenda-setting wars, where partisan communities who are successful in framing issues and events fitting to their narrative are most likely to pose a greater influence in the network.

Facebook groups, particularly non-political groups, were the most dominant group of actors in the network. This was due to the fact that they served as the catch basin of posts as other users shared them from more public spaces, such as Facebook pages containing political content.

This finding indicates that (1) non-political Facebook groups may be strategically put up to pool together diverse users, that serve as captive audiences once political content is shared in these spaces, and (2) the ubiquity of politics in the Philippine digital public sphere, as they are found in spaces outside those made specifically for political discourse.

Network actors

Weighted in-degree centrality

Content from news media was shared the most throughout the election year, followed by politicians, government officials and government offices, and the entertainment media.

Rappler was shared most often among the news media group. Meanwhile, among politicians, Marcos Jr. had the most number of posts shared by users on Facebook. Within the entertainment media category, various local and international entertainment personalities were observed to occupy the top of the list.

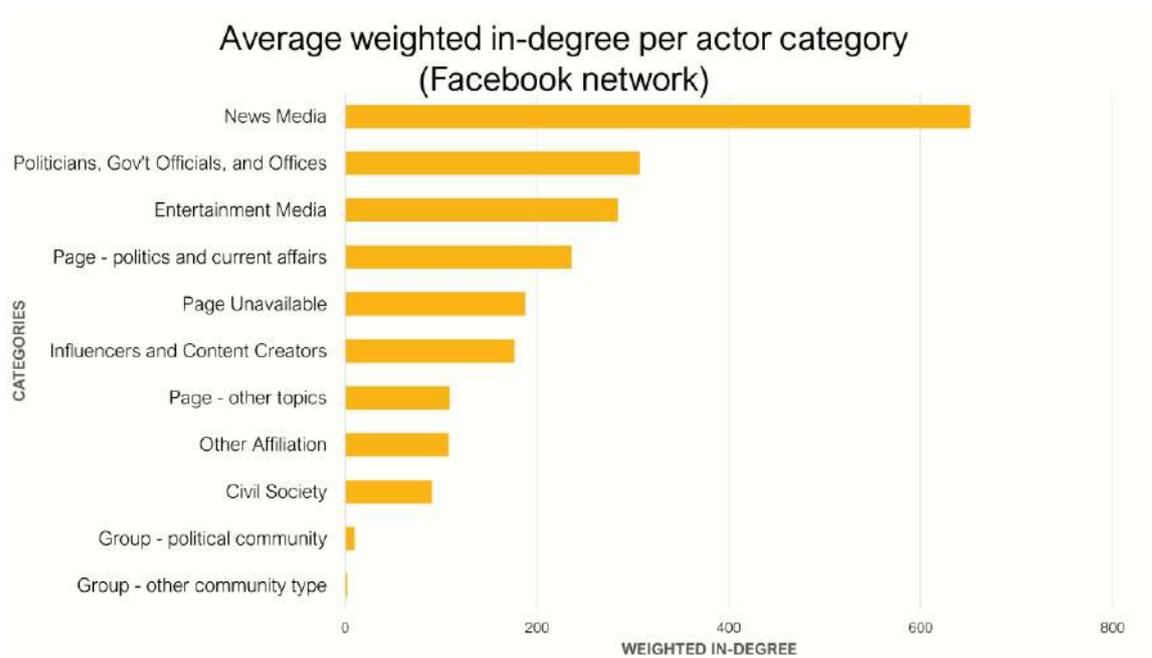


Figure 4. Average weighted in-degree per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 11. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories based on weighted in-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Weighted in-degree centrality top actors (Facebook network)		
News media	Politicians, gov't officials and offices	Entertainment media
rapplerdotcom	BongbongMarcos	estimefernando
inquirerdotnet	MayorIndaySaraDuterteOfficial	OfficialRjCruzPage
abscbnNEWS	MannyPacquiao	premierboxingchampions
manilabulletin	1SAMBAYANOfficial	AdmarV
PhilippineSTAR	PingLacsonOfficial	riannecuevasreal

On a per-quarter basis, we saw that news media consistently served as the source of content being shared on Facebook, being the category with the highest weighted in-degree centrality across all quarters.

Rappler topped the list in most quarters, ranking only second during Q3. Facebook pages about politics and current affairs also had consistently high weighted in-degree scores, which were composed of accounts that reported about political news or those that shared political commentary.

Politicians appeared to rise in centrality in terms of weighted in-degree as the elections drew closer, as shown in their presence at the top second spot during Q3 and Q4 of the election year. Among them were Marcos Jr., Sara Duterte, and Manny Pacquiao.

Pages that became unavailable played a part during the earlier part of the election year. Pages that appeared to be non-political, based on their Facebook names had high share numbers and generated high weighted in-degree centrality scores as a category during the first two quarters of the election year.

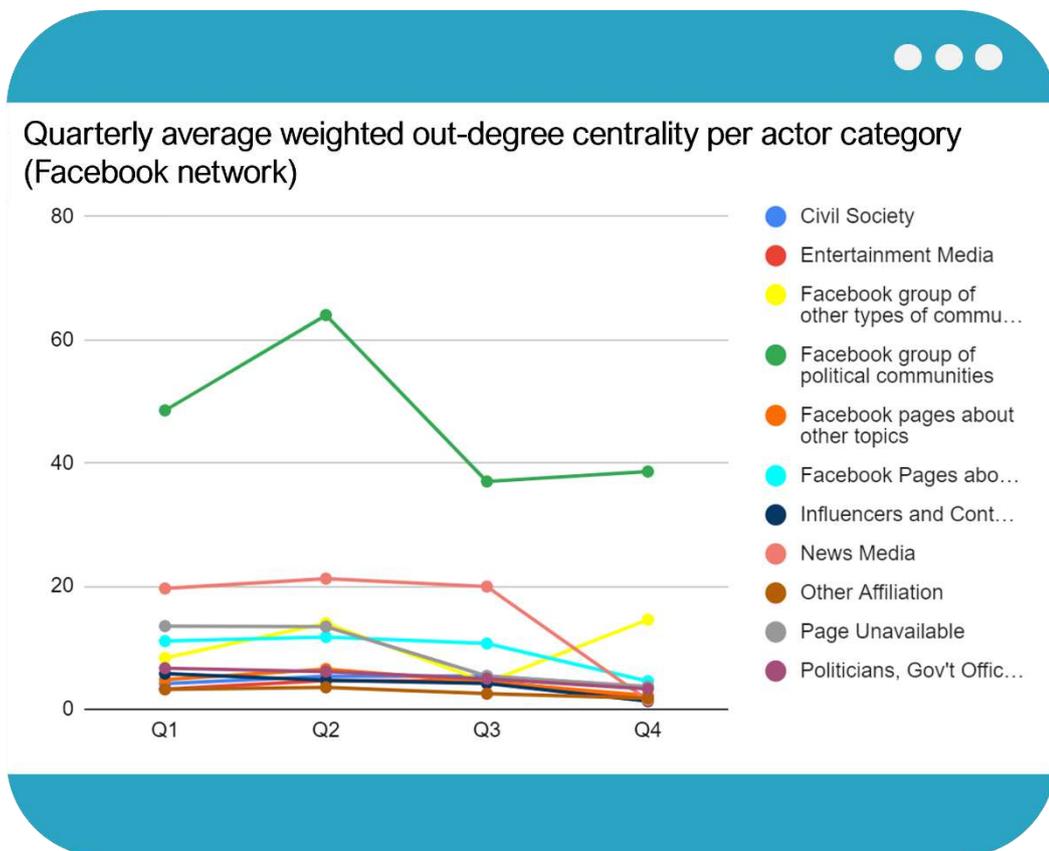


Figure 5. Quarterly average weighted in-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 12. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories per quarter based on weighted in-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Weighted in-degree centrality top actors per quarter (Facebook network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
News media	News media	News media	News media
rapplerdotcom	rapplerdotcom	manilabulletin	rapplerdotcom
abscbnNEWS	abscbnNEWS	rapplerdotcom	PhilippineSTAR
inquirerdotnet	inquirerdotnet	inquirerdotnet	inquirerdotnet
dxrd711davao	PhilippineSTAR	abscbnNEWS	manilabulletin
PTVph	manilabulletin	PhilippineSTAR	themanilatimesonline
FB pages - politics and current affairs	Unavailable pages	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices
SMNINews	Viral Trends TV	100028389173620	BongbongMarcos
News5Everywhere	Hate this feeling	100043185926337	MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official
iskomorenodomagoso	HASNA GANI SOLID Duterte	erwintulforeal	MannyPacquiao
BongGoPage	Christian Esguerra	100044205260834	lakascmdphofficial
RobredoParaSaPilipino	Adrian Fernandez Youtuber	100044223466662	RobredoPeoplesCouncil
Unavailable pages	FB pages - politics and current affairs	FB pages - politics and current affairs	FB pages - politics and current affairs
PhilippineNews01	00TheSpartan	00TheSpartan	uniteamofficial
BongbongMarcosLoyalista2022	01SKFedNagcarlan	01TIMSIM	iskomorenodomagoso
Duterte News Info Live	0421psa.cavite	0rasNaR0xasNa	News5Everywhere
AksyonKo	06jhona	100025054762351	AlvinTvCares
Mhome	OfficialBasketballBuzz	100027689845538	SMNINews

Weighted out-degree centrality

Weighted out-degree scores revealed that political Facebook groups served as the category of users generating the most number of connections with other users. This meant that they were sharing a lot of content from other users on Facebook.

They were followed by news media and other types of Facebook groups, whose shared interest as an online community appeared non-electoral (e.g., dating).

Among the top political Facebook groups were communities that appeared to support Robredo, and one that supported Marcos Jr. Rappler still topped the list as the page that shared the most during the election year, while Online Cupido ranked first among non-political Facebook groups.

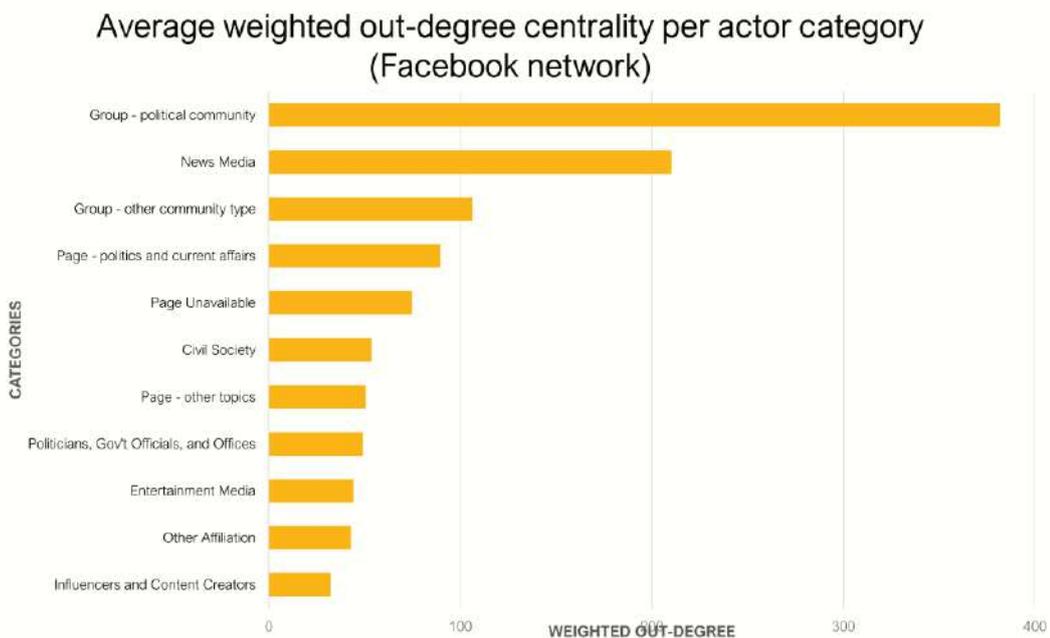


Figure 6. Average weighted out-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 13. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories based on weighted out-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Weighted out-degree centrality top actors (Facebook network)		
FB group - political communities	News media	FB group - other communities
Leni Angat Buhay Pilipinas	rapplerdotcom	ONLINE CUPIDO
VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	inquirerdotnet	Double Win
President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022!	absbnNEWS	 blackbox music 
"LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)	manilabulletin	MakatiZen
BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS	PhilippineSTAR	31M   PH TAMBAYAN

Facebook groups that were made primarily for political or electoral matters outranked all other categories in every quarter of the election year, peaking during Q2. All others were a distant second. Robredo-supportive Facebook groups dominated the list. Notable also was the presence of a Marcos Jr.-supportive Facebook group, and a group dedicated to generating electoral support away from Robredo ("anyone but leni").

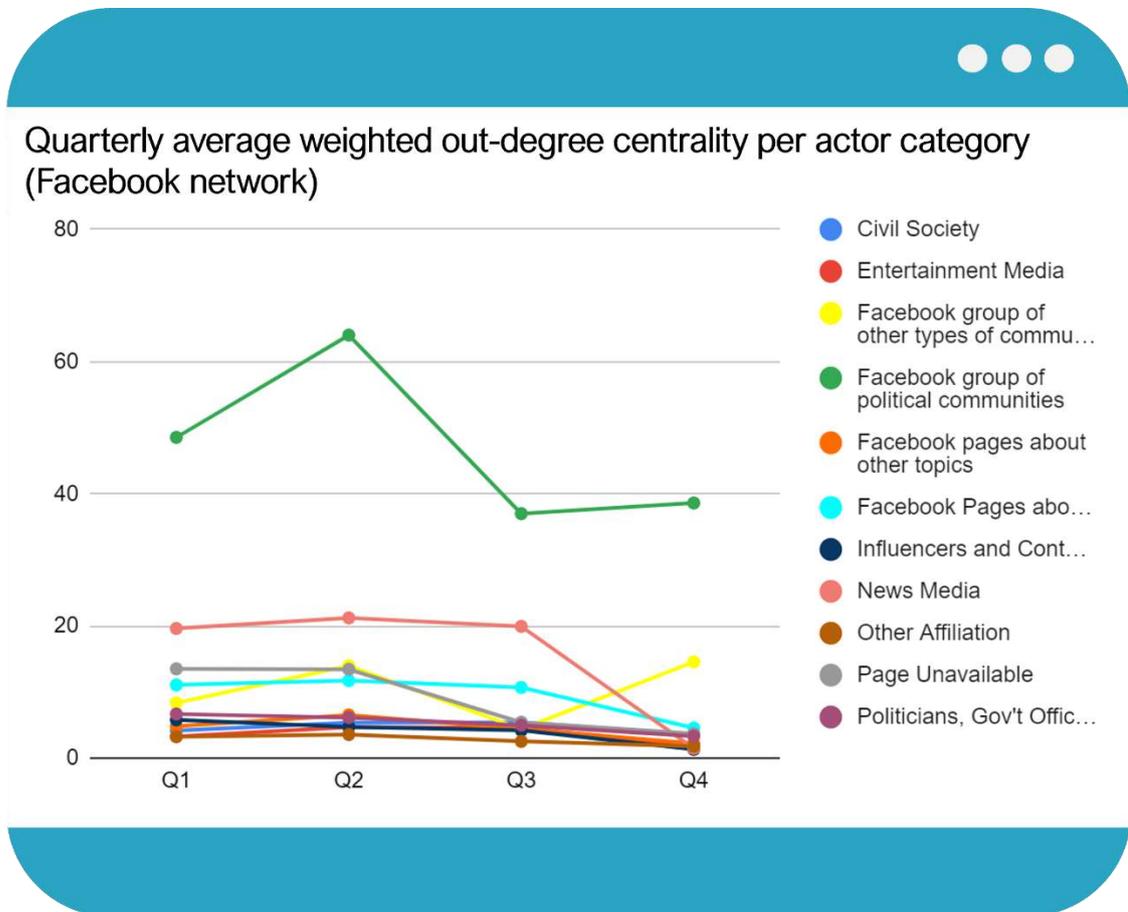


Figure 7. Quarterly average weighted out-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 14. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories per quarter based on weighted out-degree in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Weighted out-degree centrality top actors per quarter (Facebook network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities
VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	(special characters)-	Leni Robredo Para sa Pilipino	5096548220359550
President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022!	Friends Who Like MBY Pet Rescue and Sanctuary	Leni for President Movement	1203728010022030
"LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)	TEAM KUYA OGIE T.K.O. (special characters)	PUP Community for Leni	2965765013704510
OPINYONG TUNAY	Politics (#2)	VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	Anyone But Leni
Real Talk! Philippine National Election 2022	Pilipinas Kong Mahal (#3)	BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS	Progressive Philippines 2028
News media	News media	News media	FB group - other communities
rapplerdotcom	rapplerdotcom	manilabulletin	855045975388829
inquirerdotnet	abscbnNEWS	rapplerdotcom	1318720581564430
globaldailymirror	inquirerdotnet	inquirerdotnet	169670311241135
ONENewsPH	PhilippineSTAR	abscbnNEWS	215245440758950
PTVph	manilabulletin	PhilippineSTAR	834987850511549
Unavailable pages	FB group - other communities	FB group - other communities	FB page - politics and current affairs
PhilippineNews01	(special characters)	jenlisa	europeforleniforpresident
thepandorasbox.ph	Catholic Answers	LJ Louis Miss Haiti 2013	MesaTabloidPH
AksyonKo	RPW : BUYING, SELLING, TRADING, HANDLING AND ETC.	Pageantry Fanatics	ken.daduma.pay
dabigcradioofficial	TAGOLOAN FISH KEEPERS.(betta,guppy ,Goldfish)	TAGOLOAN FISH KEEPERS.(betta,guppy, Goldfish)	CawayanForLeni
OfficialMBB2019	gv gada and gv kathleen	168 / 999 / DRAGON 8 / 11-88 DIRECT SUPPLIER	MayPakiAko

Betweenness centrality

Betweenness centrality measures showed that politicians, government officials, and government offices served as bridges to multiple communities during the election year. In particular, Marcos Jr., Sara Duterte, and Pacquiao were located at the center of multiple groups in the network.

This category was closely followed by a Facebook group of political communities, which were composed mostly of groups advocating for Robredo’s presidency.

News media ranked third in terms of betweenness, with Rappler, Inquirer, and ABS-CBN news as the highest scoring in the group.

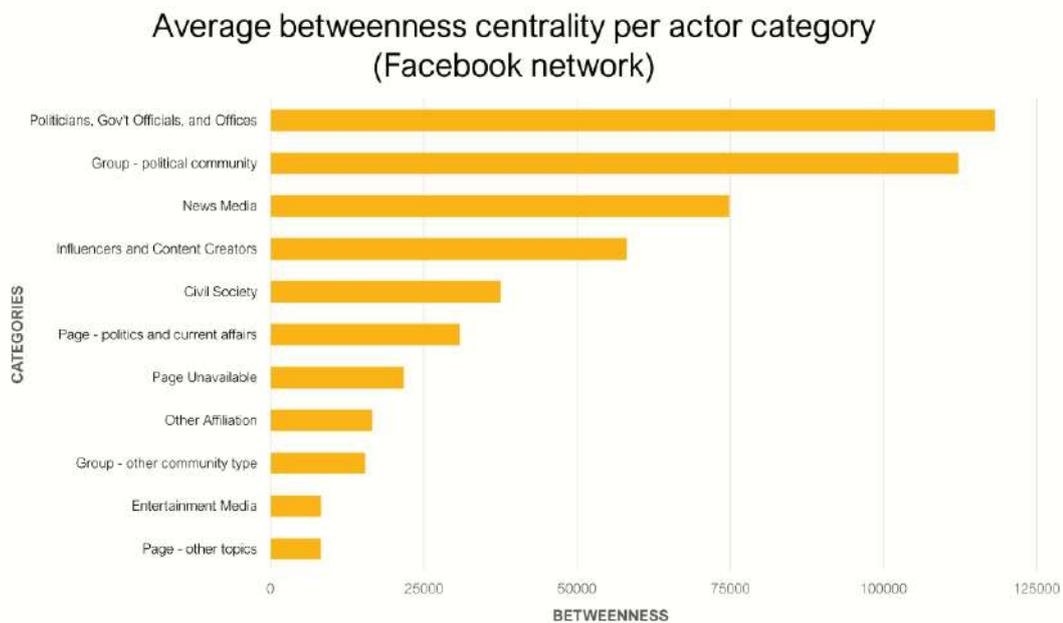


Figure 8. Average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 15. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories based on betweenness centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network, May 2021 to May 2022*

Betweenness centrality top actors (Facebook network)		
Politicians, gov't officials and offices	Fb group - political communities	News media
BongbongMarcos	Leni Angat Buhay Pilipinas	rapplerdotcom
MayorIndaySaraDuterteOfficial	VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	inquirerdotnet
MannyPacquiao	President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022!	abscbnNEWS
1SAMBAYANOfficial	"LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)	manilabulletin
PingLacsonOfficial	BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS	PhilippineSTAR

Betweenness centrality measures surged during Q4 of the election year, as more users became engaged in conversations and more clusters emerged. Politicians rose from third highest during Q1 to first place during the last two quarters of the election year.

Meanwhile, news media slowly descended in terms of their ability to bring communities together, ranking first during Q1, second during Q3, and third during Q4.

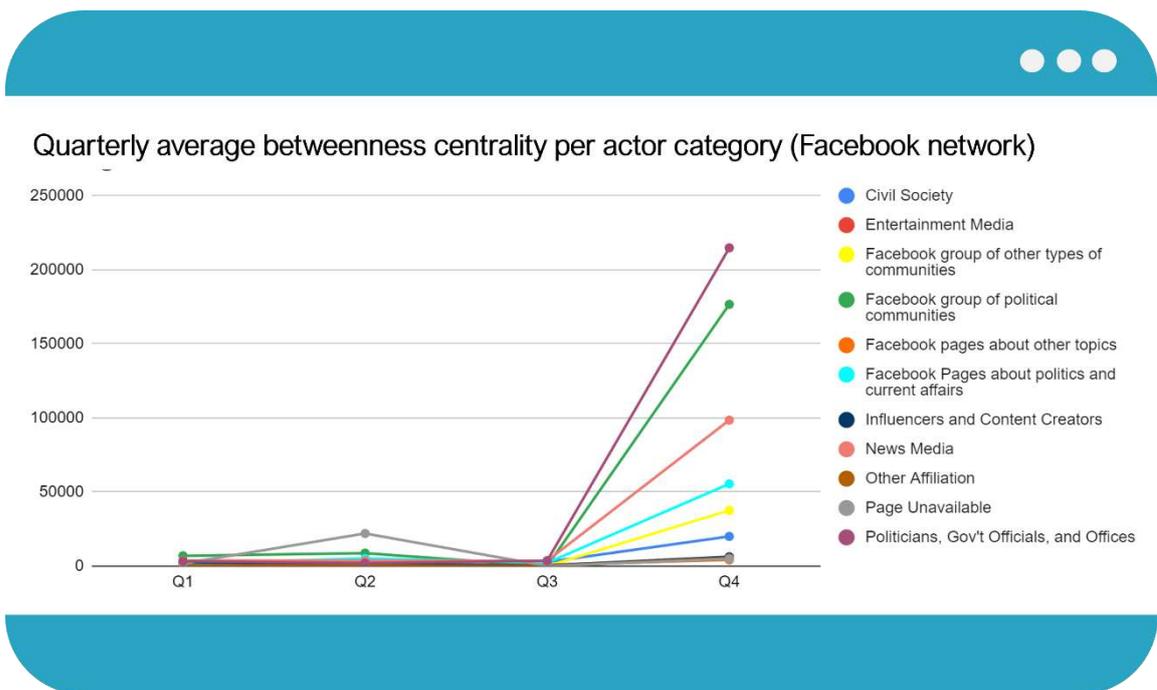


Figure 9. Quarterly average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 16. *Leading accounts/pages/groups in top actor categories per quarter based on betweenness centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Betweenness centrality top actors per quarter (Facebook network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
FB group - political communities	Unavailable pages	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices
VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	Viral Trends TV	MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official	1SAMBAYANOfficial
President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022!	Hate this feeling	BongbongMarcos	RobredoPeoplesCouncil
"LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)	HASNA GANI SOLID Duterte	1SAMBAYANOfficial	BongbongMarcos
OPINYONG TUNAY	Christian Esguerra	hugpongngpagbabago	BenignoBamAquino
Real Talk! Philippine National Election 2022	Adrian Fernandez Youtuber	BBM10OFFICIAL	TeamBBMyouth
News media	FB group - political communities	News media	FB group - political communities
rapplerdotcom	(special characters)	ONENewsPH	5096548220359550
inquirerdotnet	Friends Who Like MBY Pet Rescue and Sanctuary	CNNPhilippines	1203728010022030
globaldailymirror	TEAM KUYA OGIE T.K.O. (special characters)	rapplerdotcom	2965765013704510
ONENewsPH	Politics (#2)	sunstardavaonews	313586804158379
PTVph	Pilipinas Kong Mahal (#3)	gobatangas	645842846785614
Politicians, gov't officials, and offices	FB pages - Politics and current affairs	Civil society	News media
DocLizaRamosOng	News5Everywhere	KBBMalbay	rapplerdotcom
DocWillieOngOfficial	Radyo5PH	BBMyouthPampanga	PhilippineSTAR
DocLizaOng	SMNINews	CARMMAPH	inquirerdotnet
DoctorWillieOng	MgaBalitangPilipinas	Nagkaisalabor	manilabulletin
DocWillieOng	Radyo Pilipinas Davao	aklanonsforleni	themanilatimesonline

Pagerank centrality

Based on pagerank centrality, news media was still considered as the top source of information by highly central actors on Facebook during the election year, outranking other categories. A far second were politicians, government officials, and government offices, and following this group was the entertainment media.

Among the news media, ABS-CBN news topped the list, followed by Rappler and Philippine Star. Meanwhile, Marcos Jr. topped the list among politicians, followed by Sara Duterte and Pacquiao. International personality Estime Fernando topped the entertainment personalities, followed by Filipino singer Richard Poon and entertainment label Regal.

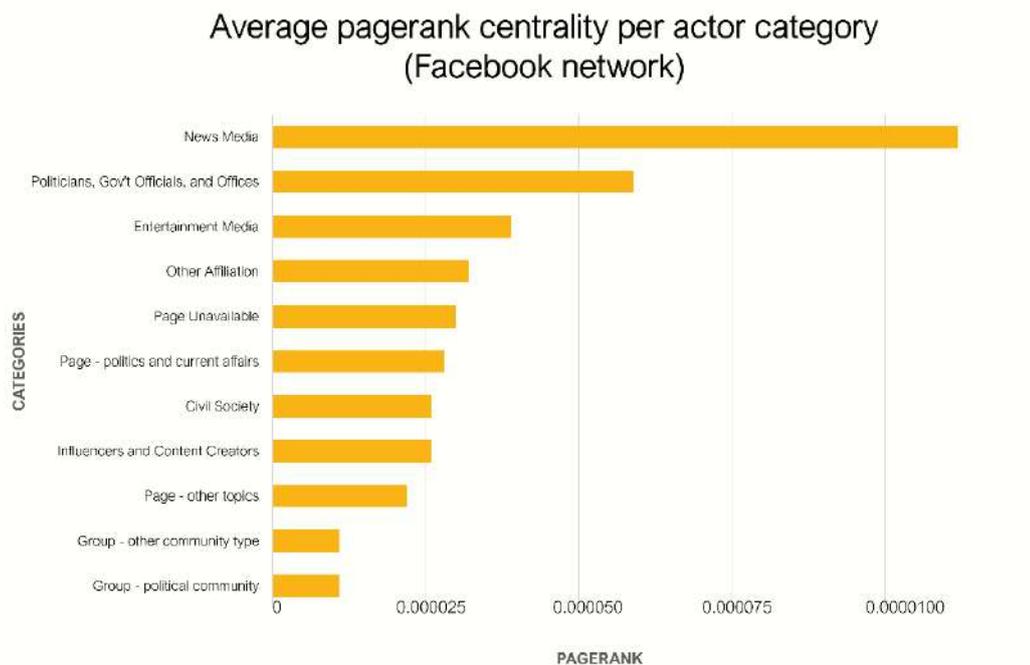


Figure 10. Average pagerank centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

Table 17. *Leading pages/accounts/groups in top actor categories based on pagerank centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network, May 2021 to May 2022*

Pagerank centrality top actors (Facebook network)		
News media	Politicians, gov't officials and offices	Entertainment media
abscbnNEWS	BongbongMarcos	estimefernando
rapplerdotcom	MayorInDaySaraDuterteOfficial	richardpoonph
PhilippineSTAR	MannyPacquiao	RegalEntertainmentInc
PTVph	1SAMBAYANOfficial	premierboxingchampions
manilabulletin	PingLacsonOfficial	OfficialRjCruzPage

The position of news media as the source of information by other, central actors fluctuated across quarters of the election year, and ultimately ended up only second to politicians during the peak of the election season.

Rappler took the top spot on Facebook during the first two quarters, while One News and ABS-CBN news dominated during Q3 and Q4, respectively. Politicians slowly became the go-to source of other central users on Facebook as it rose from second place in Q1 to first place in the list during the last quarter. Among politicians, only Marcos Jr. was consistently in the top spot.

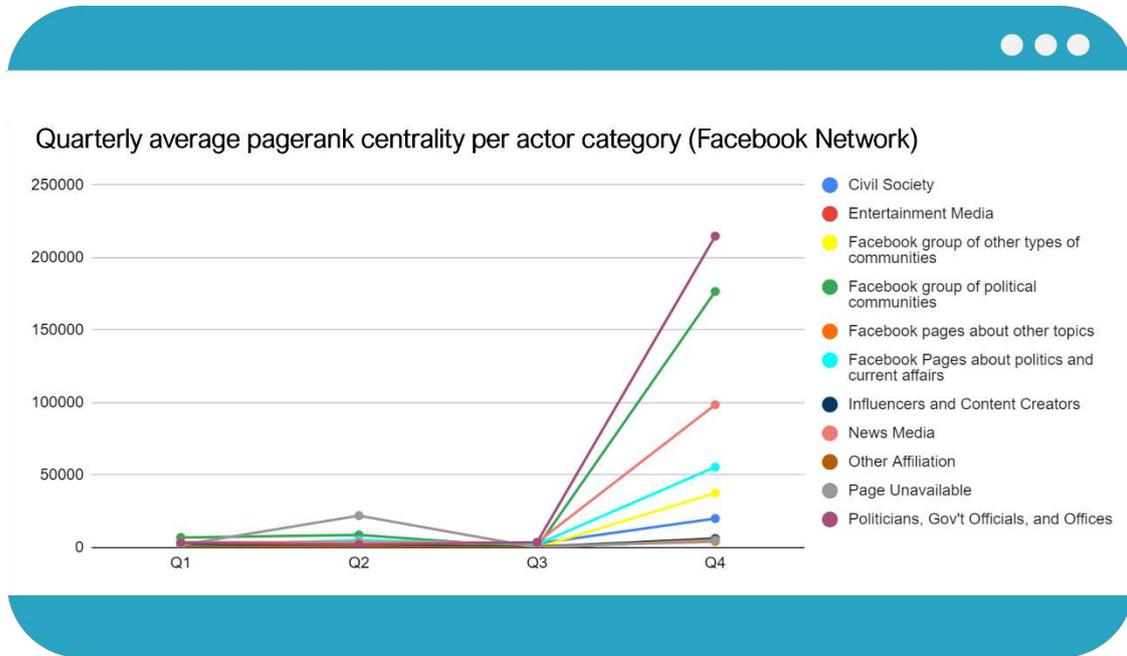


Figure 11. Quarterly average pagerank centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook Network

Table 18. *Leading pages/accounts/groups in top actor categories per quarter based on pagerank centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network*

Pagerank centrality top actors per quarter (Facebook network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
News media	Entertainment media	News media	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices
rapplerdotcom	100044303082446	ONENewsPH	1SAMBAYANOfficial
inquirerdotnet	Ronnie Ricketts	CNNPhilippines	RobredoPeoplesCouncil
globaldailymirror	Mark Magnifico Magsayo	rapplerdotcom	BongbongMarcos
ONENewsPH	QueenStar Vilma Santos	sunstardavaonews	BenignoBamAquino
PTVph	100063652183340	gobatangas	TeamBBMyouth
Politicians, gov't officials, and offices	News media	Politicians, gov't officials, and offices	News media
erwintulforeal	rapplerdotcom	MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official	abscbnNEWS
MannyPacquiao	abscbnNEWS	BongbongMarcos	rapplerdotcom
alanpetercayetano	inquirerdotnet	1SAMBAYANOfficial	CNNPhilippines
BongbongMarcos	PhilippineSTAR	hugpongngpagbabago	PhilippineSTAR
DocWillieOngOfficial	manilabulletin	BBM10OFFICIAL	themanilatimesonline
Unavailable pages	Unavailable pages	FB pages - politics and current affairs	FB pages - politics and current affairs
PhilippineNews01	Viral Trends TV	PangasinanForLeni	IsabelaParaKayLeniKiko
halalan2019updates	Hate this feeling	forthemotherlandph	DDSNewYorkOfficial
tropangsosyalmedyas	HASNA GANI SOLID Duterte	TeamBBM2022Official	uniteamofficial
thepandorasbox.ph	Christian Esguerra	BBMYouthMovement	tribunephil
TheRightPatriotsPH	Adrian Fernandez Youtuber	baliwagforleni	BBMyouthLaguna

Key findings

New media was the source of political information and news on Facebook given the high average weighted in-degree centrality scores



During the election year, scores showed the prominence of traditional sources of information, such as news media, as a source of political information circulating on the platform.

From a quarterly perspective, news media still topped the list as the group with the most number of shares. What was interesting, however, was the rise of *SMNI/News* and *News5everywhere* as big players in the election year during Q1 and Q2, respectively.

Mainstream news media was a major mover of the election conversation, but notable was the rise of religious-owned media as they increased in influence, revealed by their in-degree and pagerank centrality scores



Established in 2016, SMNI News ranked as one of the leading source of political information. As individual actors, SMNI superseded longer running news media outfits such as ABS-CBN, GMA, Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, and Philippine Star.

Notably, SMNI News was able to rank as the highest information source during Q1 wherein there was relatively minimal conversation about the election. This suggests SMNI News' successful attempt to legitimize itself on Facebook.

Robredo-aligned accounts were top sources and linkers of information but their visibility appeared to be limited

During the election year, Robredo-aligned accounts were noted to have the highest weighted out-degree centrality, as well as betweenness centrality scores. However, they failed to capture pagerank centrality.

The consistent highest weighted out-degree centrality in all quarters indicates that the sharing behavior of Robredo-aligned accounts was persistent, and their large betweenness centrality scores mean that they were able to reach multiple communities. However, these impacts may be localized to a certain segment of the Facebook population, as their pagerank centralities were lower than those of their political rivals.

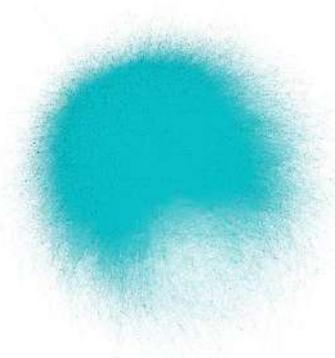
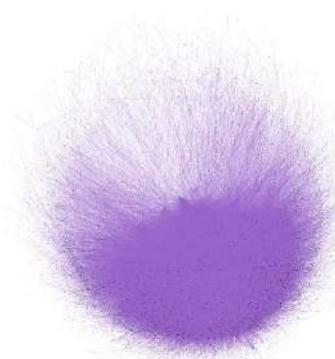
Network communities

The communities of Facebook in the election year network were separated by its partisan interests. Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts comprised the biggest cluster (17.28%) in which its size had a substantial lead from the second biggest – the Robredo-aligned and privately-owned mainstream news media accounts (13.95%) clustered together. Isko Moreno-aligned accounts comprised the third biggest cluster (13.46%), where the official accounts of senatoriables Erwin Tulfo and Alan Peter Cayetano also shared the same community. Non-political accounts comprised the fourth biggest cluster in the network (9.87%). These accounts were of different interests including gaming, dating, and comedy.

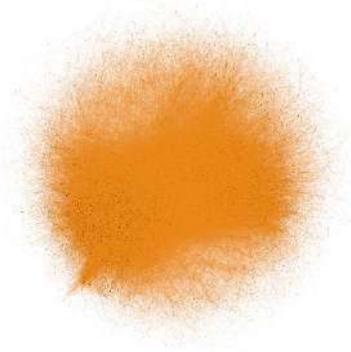
This was then followed by Duterte-aligned accounts (8.26%) in which some media actors had been clustered as well. Pacquiao-aligned accounts comprised the sixth biggest cluster (8.15%), where Bryan Cabs Show, a Facebook page that hosted games and gave away cash prizes was included in its top sources.

Government pages with some community groups comprised 4.86% of the network. The last two clusters were Mindanao-based accounts (1.08%) and Ping Lacson-aligned accounts (1.04%).

Table 19. 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network communities and their corresponding top actors, May 2021 to May 2022

FACEBOOK		
Network visualization	Top sources	Top linkers
Cluster 1: Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts (17.48%)		
	<p>Bongbong Marcos Uniteam BBM-Sara DZRH news Junriel Llander Official Alvin Tv</p>	<p>BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS President BBM United PH KBL (KILUSANG BAGONG LIPUNAN) C.A.R.E.S. BBM SARA Uniteam Supporters BBM Supporters Batangas Chapter PH</p>
Cluster 2: Robredo-aligned accounts and privately-owned mainstream news media (13.95%)		
	<p>VP Leni Robredo PH News5Everywhere Rappler Robredo Para Sa Pilipino Inquirer.net</p>	<p>ABL - Angat Buhay Lahat Leni Angat Buhay Pilipinas VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022! "LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)</p>

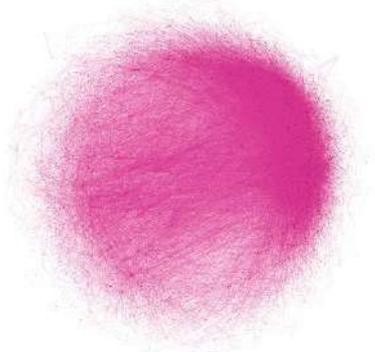
Cluster 3: Moreno-aligned accounts (13.46%)



Isko Moreno Domagoso
Erwin Tulfo Real
Alan Peter Cayetano
Positibong Progreso para
sa Pilipino
Halalan 2022

Isko Moreno Group
Taga Maynila 2022
Mayor Isko Moreno For
President 2022 Laguna
Chapter 2019 Group
YORME ISKO MORENO for
PRESIDENT 2022
MOVEMENT
Tutok And Win

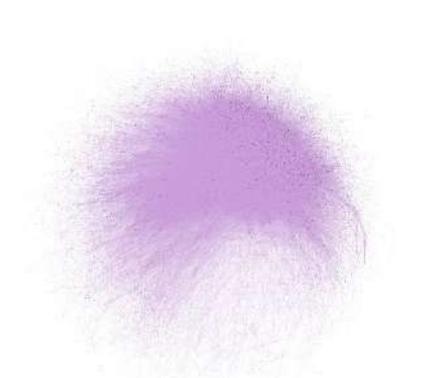
Cluster 4: Non political accounts (9.87%)



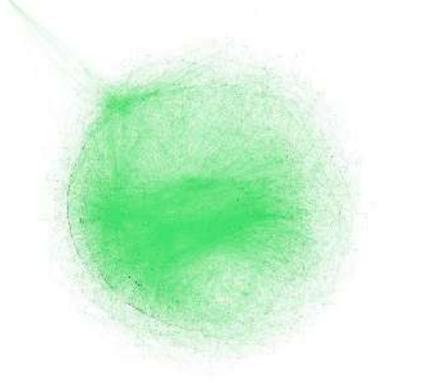
Magic Stone Gaming
Testa Gaming
Question Mark21
ONLINE CUPIDO
Tito Jeps

Online Kulitan
ONLINE KUPIDO
TangabelsOfficial
Davao Secret Blog
Filipinas Secret Files

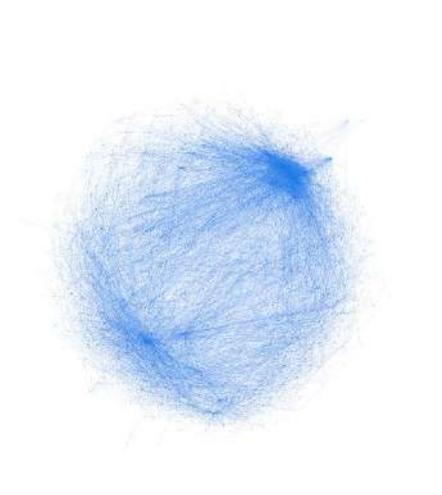
Cluster 5: Sara and Rodrigo Duterte-aligned accounts with some media (8.26%)

	<p>SMNI News Mayor Inday Sara Duterte Official Global Daily Mirror Bong Go Sara Duterte For President Movement</p>	<p>PHILIPPINE FEDERAL MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL Daily Tribune Mga Balitang Pilipinas PROTECT VICE PRESIDENT DUTERTE Concept Central</p>
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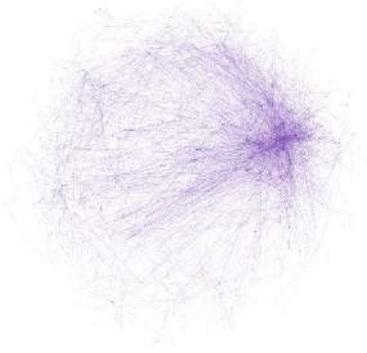
Cluster 6: Pacquiao-aligned accounts (8.15%)

	<p>Manny Pacquiao Manny Pacquiao Public Information PBC on FOX Manny Pacquiao Supporters Bryan Cabs Show</p>	<p>Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters Manny Pacquiao for President Movement (official) Juan Manila MANNY PACQUIAO for PRESIDENT 2022 Philippine Politics</p>
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Cluster 7: Government pages with some community groups (4.86%)

	<p>COMELEC National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict PCADG Davao Region Rektang Konek - Aksyon AGAD PNP Public Information Office</p>	<p>Narinig Ko Sa UP (Overheard at UP) RMN DYKR Kalibo Halalan 2019 updates The Philippine Online Student Tambayan College Editors Guild of the Philippines</p>
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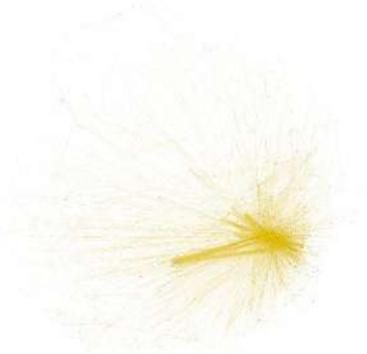
Cluster 8: Mindanao-based accounts (1.08%)



The Mindanao Today
Mindanao Voices
BNFM Cotabato
DXMS Radyo Bida
Marawi Patrol

MARAWI INO KATAWAN KA,
TEMPORARY SO DUNYA
BARMM-WATCH
BARMM NEWS UPDATE
Bantay BARMM
TIYAKAP KALILINTAD (CARE
FOR PEACE)

Cluster 9: Lacson-aligned accounts (1.04%)



Ping Lacson Official
Pinoy Balita
Bangon Bayani
Abante News Online
Ang Tunay na Probinsyano

BLUE MOVERS FOR PING
LACSON True Friends of
Peoples' League - Ping Lacson
2022

Key findings

There was a remarkable consistency in terms of the clustering of media outfits and presidential candidates

SMNI News was clustered with Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts, Abante was usually clustered with Lacson-aligned accounts, while mainstream news media such as Inquirer, ABS-CBN, Philippine Star, and Rappler were clustered with Robredo-aligned accounts.

This meant that partisan communities have high levels of engagement and consistent sharing behavior with certain media outfits. This was an indication that partisan communities preferred media outfits as their content source.



The coalition of the Duterte-Marcos Jr. tandem was a powerful political event that, to some extent, homogenized the partisanship of various communities

The Marcos Jr. cluster was only a small community at the start of the election year (3.7%). It was interesting to note that despite the absence of a formal political alliance in Q2, the then-minority Marcos Jr. cluster found its way to coalesce with Duterte-aligned accounts, the second biggest cluster in Q1.

This clustering in Q2 was explained by the common political narratives shared by a specific audience that eventually became favorable to both Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte. These topics included a mutual pro-administration stance and mutual antagonism against Robredo, the

mainstream opposition, and the media. The Marcos Jr.-Duterte convergence had been productive and strategic because the opposition cluster had considerable strength, as evidenced by it being the third biggest cluster in Q1.



The strength of the Marcos Jr.-Duterte tandem on Facebook has been insurmountable, especially starting in Q3, when the tandem publicly announced their coalition. It was also in Q3 that clusters started to be distinct to each presidential candidate. Previously clustered Moreno, Lacson, and Rodrigo Duterte in Q2 diverged in different clusters in Q3.

This meant that as the politicians built their bases, the Marcos Jr.-Duterte tandem was able to build a much stronger foundation than everyone else as this was the same time that they had formalized their political alliance.

In Q4, there was a proliferation of Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts and pro-Marcos Jr. topics in numerous clusters other than its main cluster. The Marcos Jr.-Duterte tandem had three clusters aligned with them, namely, vloggers, non-political accounts, and Mike Defensor in Quezon City communities. This is indicative of Marcos Jr.'s popularity across numerous communities.

The popularity of Marcos Jr. was also evidenced by the presence of pro-Marcos Jr. accounts and topics even in clusters distinct to another presidential candidate. This was explained by the connections found in similar audiences. Marcos Jr. with Lacson and Moreno were found to be appealing to the “macho” demographic. Meanwhile, Marcos Jr. with Pacquiao was found to engage with classes D-E in matters of political patronage such as cash gifts and benefits.

Other than the overt Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte clusters, the strength of the Marcos Jr.-Duterte tandem was found in synergy with the government pages, region-based accounts, and non-political accounts

Followers of government pages shared the audience with the pro-Duterte administration hence they amplified certain political narratives (e.g. PNP and NTF-ELCAC accounts further the anti-communism and peace and order rhetoric). Lastly, region-based accounts, usually from Davao and Mindanao, provided solid support for Sara Duterte.

Non-political accounts were noted as major actors in the election conversation

This was evidenced by it being the third biggest cluster in Q4 and the fourth biggest cluster in the election year. The non-political accounts cluster had a localized clustering evidenced in the network visualization, making it seem to be the third biggest cluster in the network rather than the Moreno-aligned accounts which were engulfed in the Marcos Jr. cluster. (See Figure 1). These non-political accounts were usually community groups, comedy pages, and buy-and-sell groups.



Topics within this cluster were “personalized” political posts suggesting support for Marcos Jr. Examples of which were narratives of being a solid supporter, posts linking to Marcos Jr.’s YouTube vlogs, and calls for respect and “oneness” as Filipinos amidst differing political views. It also included light and subtle political content such as staging political opponents in a virtual boxing fight, and jokes and sarcastic posts against Robredo.

Marcos and Duterte supporters had separate communities in the election year perspective

This meant that they shared a mutually supportive relationship during the opportune points of the election season. Duterte supporters had a solid community base and it was not automatic that they shared their support with the Marcos cluster. The initial Bong Go-Duterte and Duterte-Duterte tandem being pushed by the administration supporters, as well as the existence of the Robredo-Sara (RoSa) supporters, might explain the separation of these communities.

Sara Duterte, hence, had benefited in a two-pronged manner: her tandem with Marcos Jr. and her being the daughter of then-president Rodrigo Duterte.

There was a nonexistent clustering of progressives and activist groups

This might be explained by their negligible cluster size, and/or their coalition with the mainstream political opposition actors such as Robredo-aligned accounts. This might also be indicative of the insurmountable intensity of the interactions brought by the political capital of major political actors, i.e., Marcos and Duterte on Facebook.



Table 20. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network³

	QUARTER 1		QUARTER 2		QUARTER 3		QUARTER 4	
Period	May-July 2021		Aug-Oct 2021		Nov 2021- Jan 2022		Feb 2022 - May 2022	
Twitter Accounts	37,936		58, 654		60,091		56, 998	
Interactional connections	134,130		274,393		137,758		375, 449	
Network density	0		0		0		0	
Structure	Segmented center with two outer rings of small groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented but denser center with two outer rings of small groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented and loose wherein one cluster is relatively isolated, and with two outer rings of groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented but denser center	
Major clusters	Ten		Six		Eight		Eight	
Percentage of network	72.17%		75.27%		30.36%		85.05%	
	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics
Cluster 1	Moreno-Ong aligned accounts and FB news & political pages (16.71%)		News media and FB accounts aligned with Marcos, Sara Duterte, Bong Go & Rodrigo Duterte (21.26%)		Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte-aligned accounts (11%)		Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte-aligned accounts (29.21%)	
	<p>Top sources: Iskomorenodomagoso Erwintulforeal DocWillieOngOfficial Alanpetercayetano DocLizaOng</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): Puso ng Maynila SAN JOSE DEL MONTE BULACAN NETIZENS ISKOnatics (Isko Moreno Advocates) YORME ISKO MORENO for PRESIDENT 2022 MOVEMENT DocLizaRamosoOng</p>	<p>Moreno’s stance on various socio-political issues</p> <p>Moreno’s platform on ‘cleaning up’ the government</p> <p>Doc Ong’s medical advice and tips for common ailments</p>	<p>Top sources: News5Everywhere BongbongMarcos SMNINews Atty.LarryGadon2022 Manilabulletin</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): PRO-GOVERNMENT (G) PROTECT THE PRESIDENT DUTERTE (G) PRESIDENT BONGBONG MARCOS 2022 (G) News5Everywhere TEAMBBM2022-KSA (G)</p>	<p>Attacks vs other presidentiables Robredo, Moreno and Pacquiao</p> <p>Expressions of support for Marcos, Duterte, Bong Go and Sara Duterte</p> <p>Anti-media sentiment which implies bias in coverage</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): manilabulletin MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official BongbongMarcos SMNINews junriellandervlogs</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS BBM2022 Supporters Group BBM Supporters Batangas Chapter PH Ala Eh BBM kami BBM SUPPORTERS CAVITE</p>	<p>BBM disqualification case and the tirades between COMELEC commissioners</p> <p>SMNI news of Robredo and Marcos’ stance on NTF-ELCAC and on communist groups</p> <p>Marcos-Duterte caravans, primarily volunteer groups invoking the promise of Bagong Lipunan</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): BongbongMarcos uniteamofficial MayorIndaySaraDuterteOfficial AlvinTvCares junriellandervlogs</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): President BBM United PH BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS KBL-BBM-SARA UNITEAM (KILUSANG BAGONG LIPUNAN) BBM SARA Uniteam Supporters The PATRIOT</p>	<p>Content defending Marcos Jr. regarding their family’s estate tax issue</p> <p>Negative campaign against Robredo, including linking her with CPP-NPA-NDF</p> <p>Discussions about the anticipated landslide victory of Marcos-Duterte tandem</p>

³ Top 3 only, see appendix for the full table

		Government and local media and FB accounts aligned with Bong Go, Sara Duterte & Rodrigo Duterte (15.86%)		Moreno, Lacson, and Rodrigo Duterte official and aligned accounts (19.60%)		Robredo-aligned accounts with some private mainstream news media (6.67%)		Robredo-aligned accounts with some private mainstream news media (19.5%)	
Cluster 2	<p>Top sources: SMNI News BongGoPage SaraDuterteForPresident Movement Dxrd711davao PTVph</p>	<p>Inflammatory attacks against other presidentiables, opposition personalities, CPP-NPA, and Joma Sison by known Duterte-allied personalities Duterte's legacy projects such as (War on drugs, Build build build) and his defense of issues (West PH Sea) Sara Duterte's early lead in the Pulse Asia survey</p>	<p>Top sources: Iskomorenodomago so Positibong Progreso para sa Pilipino Halalan 2022 Sa PCSO Go Na Tayo Partidoreporma</p>	<p>Expressions of support for Moreno and features of his projects in Manila News about Lacson-Sotto filing of COC, and some expressions of support for the tandem Criticisms of Pacquiao, Marcos and De Lima</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): VPLeniRobredoPH rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet abscbnNEWS PhilippineSTAR</p>	<p>Conversations around Jessica Soho presidential interviews where Marcos Jr. declined invitation Robredo supporters' posts about their volunteer-driven grassroots campaign initiatives Fact-check posts by Robredo's supporters on Marcos campaign's false claims</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): VPLeniRobredoPH News5Everywhere rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet PhilippineSTAR</p>	<p>Content highlighting the authenticity of Leni Robredo Posts containing sarcastic and humorous attack against BBM camp Praises about celebrities and public figures vocal in their support for Leni-Kiko tandem</p>	
	<p>Top linkers (all groups): DR JAC & GEN PARLADE MOVEMENT FOR PEACE & DEVELOPMENT PROTECT THE PRESIDENT DUTERTE PHILIPPINE FEDERAL MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL Solid Duterte Supporters Worldwide Bong Go for President 2022</p>		<p>Top linkers (All groups): Isko Moreno Domagoso News YORME ISKO MORENO for PRESIDENT 2022 MOVEMENT Marcos - Duterte Solid Supporters FORTUNE DAILY NEWS PING LACSON FOR PRESIDENT MOVEMENT</p>						<p>Top linkers (groups): ABL - Angat Buhay Lahat Nationalists for Leni-Kiko Kay Leni at Kiko Tayo Leni for President Movement VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends</p>

Cluster 3	Privately owned mainstream news media and Robredo & opposition-aligned accounts (14.11%)		Pacquiao aligned accounts and boxing and gaming-related pages(16.99%)		Lacson aligned accounts with private mainstream media and content creators (3.42%)		Non-political accounts (16.72%)	
		<p>Top sources: News5Everywhere RobredoParaSaPilipino VPLeniRobredoPH Rapplerdotcom abscbnNEWS</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022 News5Everywhere "LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL) OPINYONG TUNAY</p>	<p>Passing of PNoy Features of VP Robredo's official visits all over the Philippines and provincial groups pushing for Robredo's candidacy Criticisms of Duterte administration: 'Jet ski' and Spratlys islands, VFA, Vaccination, Troll farms</p>	<p>Top sources: PBConFOX MannyPacquiao MagicStoneGaming TestaGaming MannyPacquiaoPublicInformation</p> <p>Top linkers (All groups): Manny Pacquiao for President Movement (official) Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters BOXING PHILIPPINES The Corner: PBC on FOX BOXING TALK PILIPINAS</p>	<p>Pacquiao's retirement from boxing Pacquiao as the standard bearer of Pimentel PDP-Labangwing Criticisms against Duterte, Go, Moreno, Marcos and Trillanes</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): tribunephil gmapublicaffairs MikeDefensorWinnieCastelo dzmmteleradyo PINGLACSONSUPPORTERS</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): tribunephil cnc.tribunephilpolitics.com.ph radyobanderailoilo dzmmteleradyo</p>	<p>Discussions about issues on China and West Philippine Sea News about COMELEC's preparation on the nearing elections Statements of support towards the Lacson-Sotto tandem</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): thechroniclephilippines QuestionMark21 davaosecretblog MagicStoneGaming TangabelsOfficial FilipinasSecretFiles</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): Online Kulitan davaosecretblog TangabelsOfficial FilipinasSecretFiles what if</p>



Twitter networks emerge from the interaction of users via Tweets. A link between two users is formed when one user tags another user using the '@' symbol in their tweet whenever they reply, quote, retweet, and mention them. The findings in this section disentangle the complex social networks of diverse actors, the interactions they perform, the political discourses they construct, and the communities they cultivate on Twitter from May 2021 to May 2022.



General findings



During the 2022 Philippine General Elections, Twitter appeared to be a reactionary platform with discourses driven by ongoing events and issues

The affordances and culture of the platform made it ideal for vocal, politically engaged publics, as it enabled them to directly connect with actors holding traditional elite power, such as politicians and the media, without the need for a mediator. Conversely, politicians and other prominent actors were able to directly engage users and tailor-fit messages at a personal level.



At the actor level, Robredo appeared to be the most popular among political candidates on Twitter, while ordinary users dominated the network

Meanwhile, unidentifiable users engaged in the most number of conversations with others by generating huge volumes of retweets, mentions, and replies. In terms of political orientation, Twitter appeared to be dominated by prominent opposition actors like presidential candidate Leni Robredo, political coalition 1SAMBAYAN, senatorial candidate Chel Diokno, and their supporters. Robredo was the most popular candidate among the political candidates.



At the community level, communities focused on issues and events

The distinct communities for presidential candidates Robredo, Marcos Jr., and Pacquiao were notable. Among the Robredo-aligned communities, two groups were apparent: (1) one that included mainstream news media, and (2) another with Robredo supporters and other influential actors that were aligned with Robredo.

Distinct in the Robredo-aligned communities was the presence of detractors who attacked Robredo, her allies, and supporters. Meanwhile, Marcos Jr. maintained his presence in the election year network with his growing community by converging with Duterte-aligned accounts.

Global network characteristics

The Twitter election year network had 702,785 accounts and 3,102,891 connections through retweets, replies, quote tweets, and mentions. The election year had 11 major clusters, comprising more than three quarters or 76.67% of the network. It was dense in the center with overlapping clusters. The network further extended to the fringes into a ring of isolated users (Figure 12).

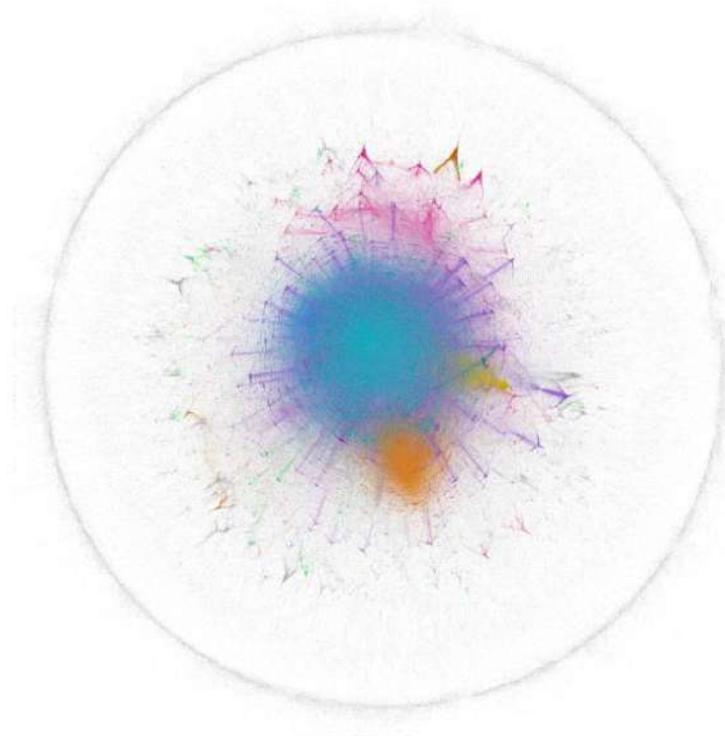


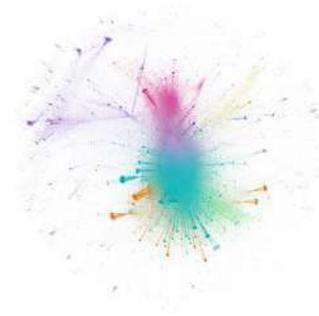
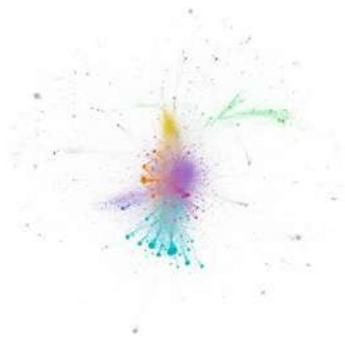
Figure 12. *2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network, May 2021 to May 2022*

At the start of the election year, Q1 had 120,599 Twitter users participating in election discourse with 328,032 connections, with 10 major clusters containing 79.87% of the network (Figures 13). These numbers almost doubled in Q2 with 623,657 interactional connections. There was also a 57% increase in users from 120,599 (Q1) to 189,452 (Q2) (Table 21). The number of major clusters decreased to nine, but they made up a larger proportion of the network, at 87.89%.

In Q3, the network was noticeably denser. A total of 92.56% of the network belonged to the six major clusters during this period, which meant almost all the nodes belonged to the largest communities on the platform. During Q3, there were significantly fewer Twitter accounts participating in the election discourse compared to Q2. Network size dropped by 68%, and interactions dropped slightly at 12.07%.

Lastly, in Q4, around 76.94% of the network belonged to the nine major clusters. Notable in Q4 was the major increase in Twitter accounts and interactive connections at 363,866 users and 1,670,602 connections, respectively.

<p><i>Figure 13A.</i> 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network, May to July 2021</p>	<p><i>Figure 13B.</i> 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network, Aug to Oct 2021</p>
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<p><i>Figure 13C.</i> 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network, November to July 2021</p>	<p><i>Figure 13C.</i> 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network, Aug to Oct 2021</p>
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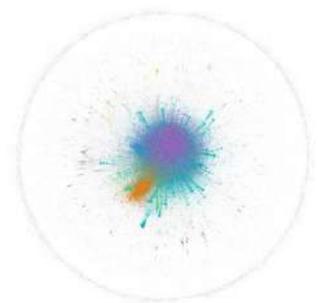


Figure 13. 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network per quarter of the election year

Table 21. *Summary of global network metrics of the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Network metrics	Election year May 2021 to May 2022	Q1 May to July 2021	Q2 Aug to Oct 2021	Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022	Q4 Feb 2021 to May 2022
Twitter accounts	702,785	120,599	189,452	60,657	363,866
Interactional connections	3,102,891	328,032	623,657	548,385	1,670,602
Network density	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Major clusters	11	10	9	6	9
Percentage of network	76.67%	79.87%	87.89%	92.56%	76.94%

Network composition

Ordinary users made up almost half of the Twitter election year network (44.1%) (Figure 14). Ordinary users were accounts that were not officially and/or explicitly involved in politics, media, civil society, and other stated affiliations.

Actors that were categorized as “Missing Data” comprised 16% of the network. The machine was not able to code these users due to limitations in our data sources.

Following this category were users that had other affiliations (9%). News media and unidentifiable users made up 8.9% and 8.5% of the network respectively, while users who were politicians or government officials only formed 3.1% of the network.

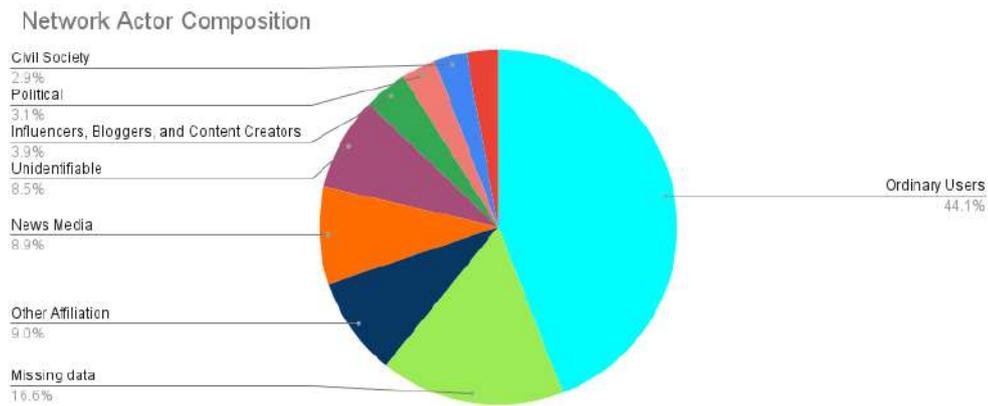
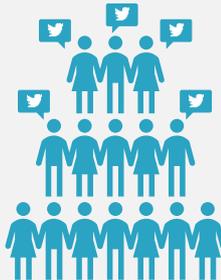


Figure 14. Actor category distribution in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Key findings



Twitter was the largest network in terms of accounts engaged in election discourse compared to other platforms. Compared to Facebook and YouTube, Twitter had the most number of users participating in conversations about the elections.



Twitter political communication networks were composed of politically engaged publics. Twitter networks were constituted through active means of engagement (e.g., sharing, replying, and quoting other users). Thus, being politically interested was a given in the network.



Ordinary users were sustaining the discourse. Ordinary users were the largest group of actors in the election year, comprising almost half of the network.

These users contributed to the discussion through the volume of retweets, mentions, and replies as also seen by their high average weighted out-degree score. Other actors like politicians, news media, and entertainment media might be the focal points of interactions in the network but ordinary users were the driving force that kept the discourse and interactions alive.

Network actors

Weighted in-degree centrality

Politicians received the highest volume of retweets, mentions, and replies among all actor categories (Figure 15). Among the most popular in this group throughout the election year were Robredo, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), and Marcos Jr.

News media institutions like Rappler, Inquirer, and ABS-CBN news also served as the focal point of interactions among Twitter users (Table 22).

Entertainment media also had a high average of weighted in-degree among the actor categories, with top entertainment media actors such as streaming platforms like Netflix PH and IWantTFC, as well as The Kingmaker’s director, Lauren Greenfield.

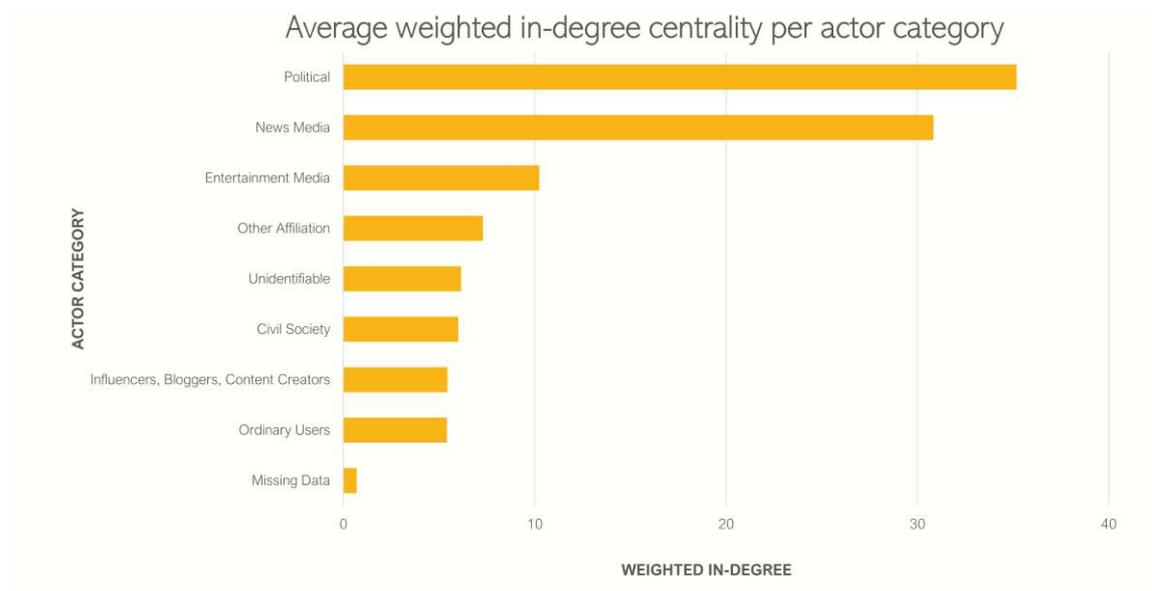


Figure 15. Average weighted in-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Table 22. Leading accounts in top actor categories based on weighted in-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Weighted in-degree centrality top actors (Twitter network)		
Political	News media	Entertainment media
lenirobreo	rapplerdotcom	lgreen66
comelec	inquirerdotnet	iwanttfc
bongbongmarcos	absbnnews	netflix_ph
kikopangilinan	maracepeda	showtime
sotto_tito	philippinestar	gemoraaudie

Examining weighted in-degree on a quarterly basis, news media had a steady increase in interactions from Q1 to Q3 and experienced its peak during Q4 (Figure 16).

Top news media actors included Rappler, Inquirer, and ABS-CBN News for most of the election year, but suspended accounts and unidentifiable accounts served as the focal points of election-related tweets more than mainstream news media during Q2 (Table 23).

Political actors, such as Robredo, Diokno, 1SAMBAYAN, and Marcos Jr. were also popular users in the network, but there was an observed decrease in weighted in-degree scores during Q3. In the same quarter, entertainment media had a sudden rise in popularity but had a significant decrease in engagement from other users during Q4.

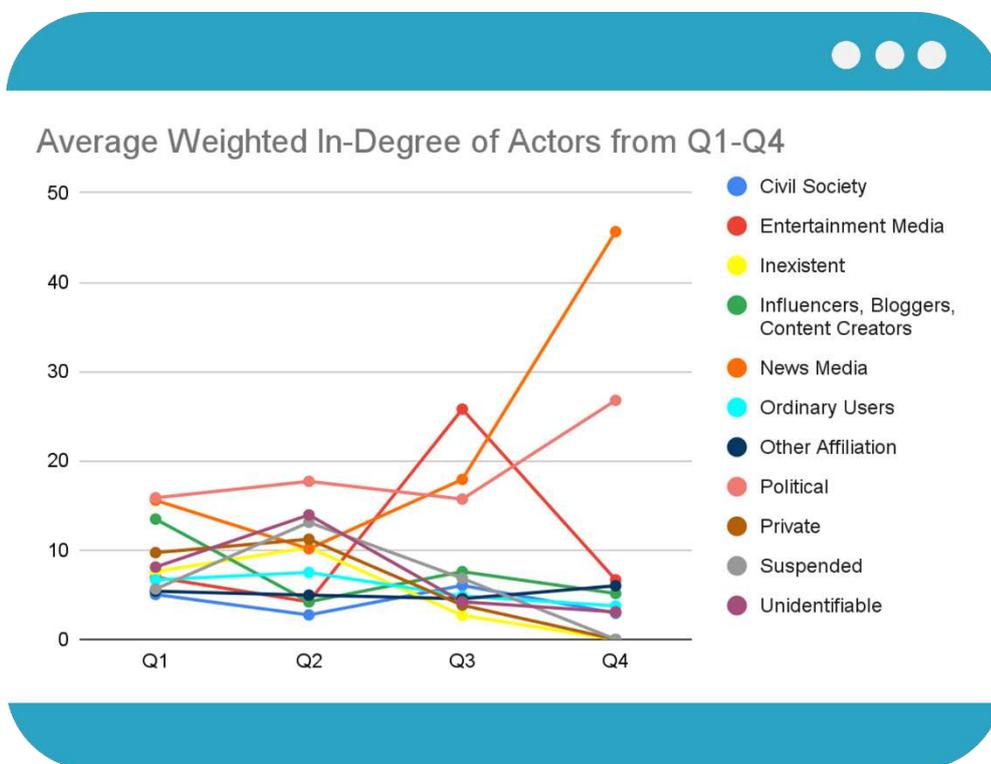


Figure 16. Quarterly average weighted in-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Table 23. *Leading accounts in top actor categories per quarter based on weighted in-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Weighted in-degree centrality top actors per quarter (Twitter network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Political	Political	Entertainment media	News media
cheldiokno	lenirobreo	lgreen66	rapplerdotcom
1sambayan	sotto_tito	netflix_ph	inquirerdotnet
lenirobreo	bongbongmarcos	iwanttfc	maracepeda
sotto_tito	iampinglacson	showtime	abscbnnews
trillanessonny	dickgordong	dogwoof	philippinestar
News media	Unidentifiable	News media	Political
rapplerdotcom	aberasturi2	rapplerdotcom	lenirobreo
abscbnnews	buangsonny	inquirerdotnet	comelec
inquirerdotnet	chadachada17	philstarnews	kikopangilinan
cnnphilippines	danwaytoofar	maracepeda	bongbongmarcos
gmanews	jimmy93171751	manilabulletin	jabjimenez
Influencers, bloggers, content creators	Suspended	Political	Entertainment media
sirrenzaavedra	suspended user #1	comelec	gemoraaudie
ogie_rosa	suspended user #2	rowena_guanzon	awrabriguelaaa
markgeronimo_	suspended user #3	lenirobreo	donnypangilinan
pinoyakoblog	suspended user #4	bongbongmarcos	sb19official
kevinkalbo	suspended user #5	sotto_tito	bgyo_ph

Weighted out-degree centrality

Unidentifiable accounts were the most engaged in the election year network. Ordinary users also contributed large volumes of retweets, mentions, and replies (Figure 17). It was also worth noting that aside from receiving huge volumes of interactions by other users, news media actors also interacted a lot with other users in the network. Top media actors included Rappler and its affiliated account, PhVote as well as Inquirer, News5, and ABS-CBN News (Table 24).

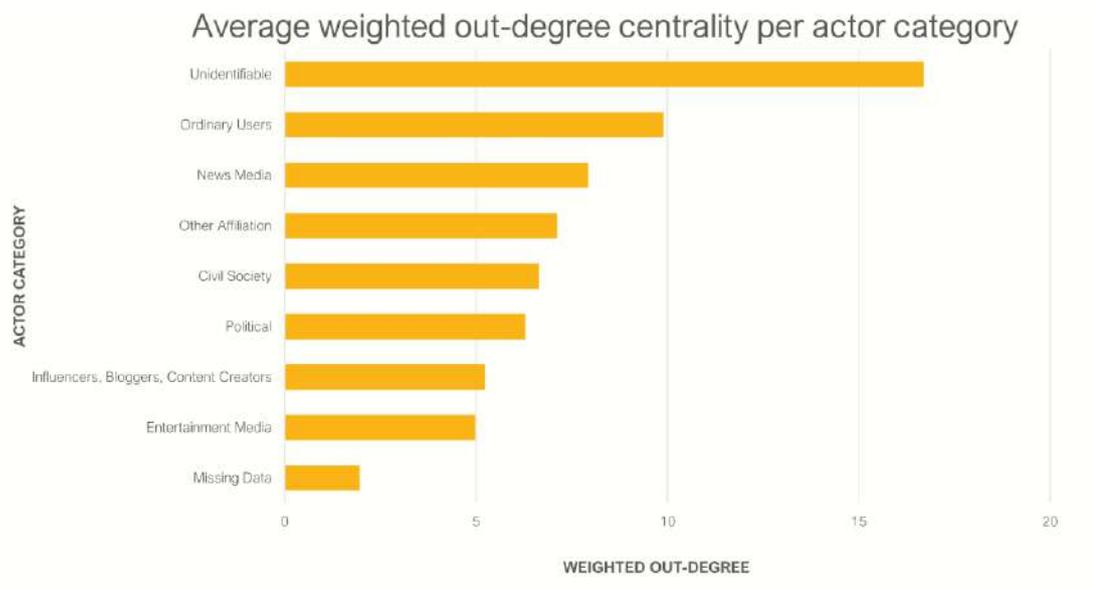


Figure 17. *Average weighted out-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Table 24. *Leading accounts in top actor categories based on weighted out-degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Weighted out-degree centrality top actors (Twitter network)		
Unidentifiable	Ordinary users	News media
buangsonny	lino_jam	rapplerdotcom
dutaetaetae	dudesabarita	phvote
love_meow_24	baldugho	inquirerdotnet
jimmy93171751	danwaytoofar	news5ph
jobjori	iampatriotmds	abscbnnews

On a quarterly basis, unidentifiable accounts and suspended accounts, as well as non-existent accounts during the period of classification, interacted with other users the most during Q1 compared to other actors (Figure 18).

Unidentifiable accounts and nonexistent accounts peaked in their online activities in Q2, but there was an observed dip in their activity in the subsequent quarters, except for unidentifiable actors who increased their activity slightly in Q4.

On the other hand, news media accounts like News5, Inquirer, Rappler, and ABS-CBN news fluctuated in Q2 but were able to rise in Q3 and Q4 (Table 25). Ordinary users also consistently interacted with the other users in the network.

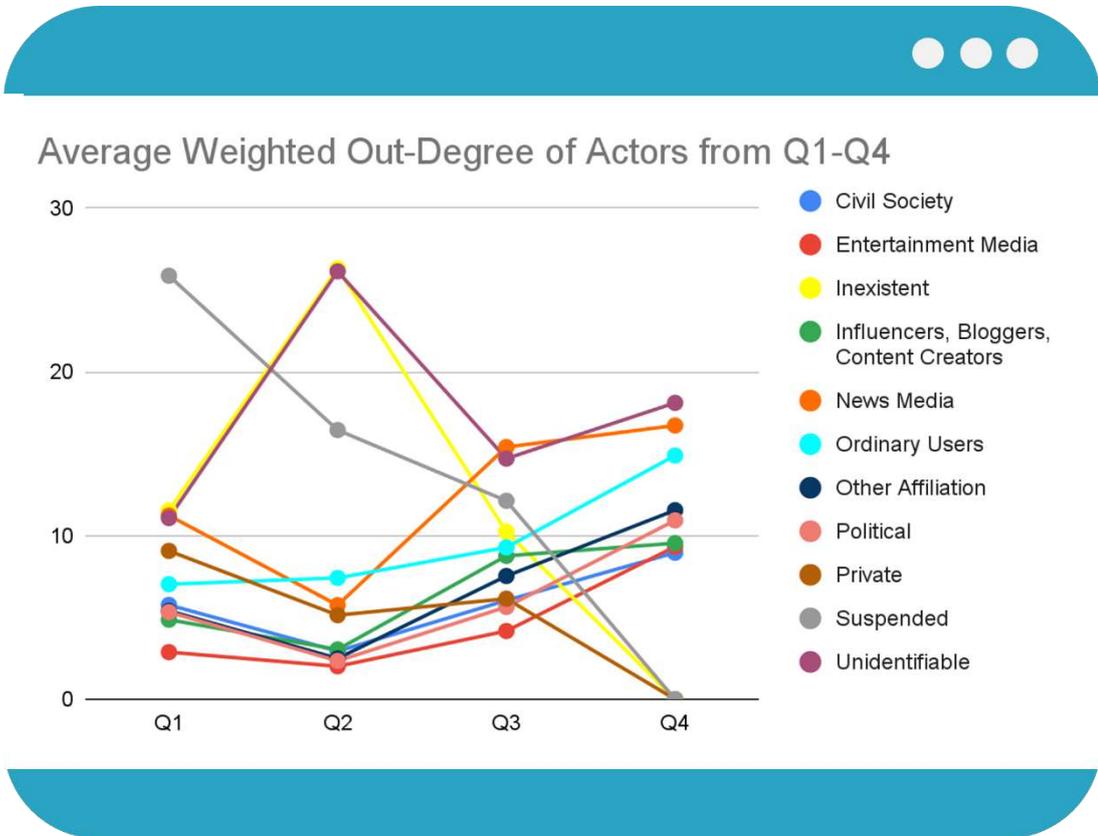


Figure 18. Quarterly average weighted out-degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Table 25. *Leading accounts in top actor categories per quarter based on weighted out-degree in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Weighted out-degree centrality top actors per quarter (Twitter network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Inexistent	Inexistent	News media	Unidentifiable
inexistent user #1	inexistent user #2	myowntab	jobjorl
inexistent user #2	inexistent user #6	news5ph	phlnewsinsider
inexistent user #3	inexistent user #7	abscbnnews	hampoyjampoy
inexistent user #4	inexistent user #1	phvote	dragun214
inexistent user #5	inexistent user #8	inquirerdotnet	vertacoy
News media	Unidentifiable	Unidentifiable	News media
myowntab	buangsonny	buangsonny	rapplerdotcom
inquirerdotnet	dutaetaetae	danwaytoofar	phvote
politiko_ph	danwaytoofar	jimmy93171751	news5ph
abscbnnews	jimmy93171751	graceeverlast	inquirerdotnet
news5ph	aberasturi2	chadachada17	abscbnnews
Unidentifiable	Suspended	Suspended	Ordinary users
buangsonny	suspended user #1	suspended user #8	angelesboyok
quedokfedok	suspended user #4	suspended user #9	lino_jam
juliliepe	suspended user #2	suspended user #10	thegary86481490
newscenterph1	suspended user #6	suspended user #11	booboolenlen
vertacoy	suspended user #7	suspended user #12	iloveksh123

Betweenness centrality

Politicians served as the focal point of multiple communities on Twitter during the election year, followed by news media and unidentifiable users. Opposition actors Leni Robredo and 1Sambayan led the list of politicians with the highest betweenness centrality on Twitter.

They were followed by COMELEC, Richard Gordon, and Tito Sotto III. Among news media, Rappler topped the list, followed by student journalist *eicvsfascism*, and other mainstream news organizations such as ABS-CBN, CNN Philippines, and Inquirer.

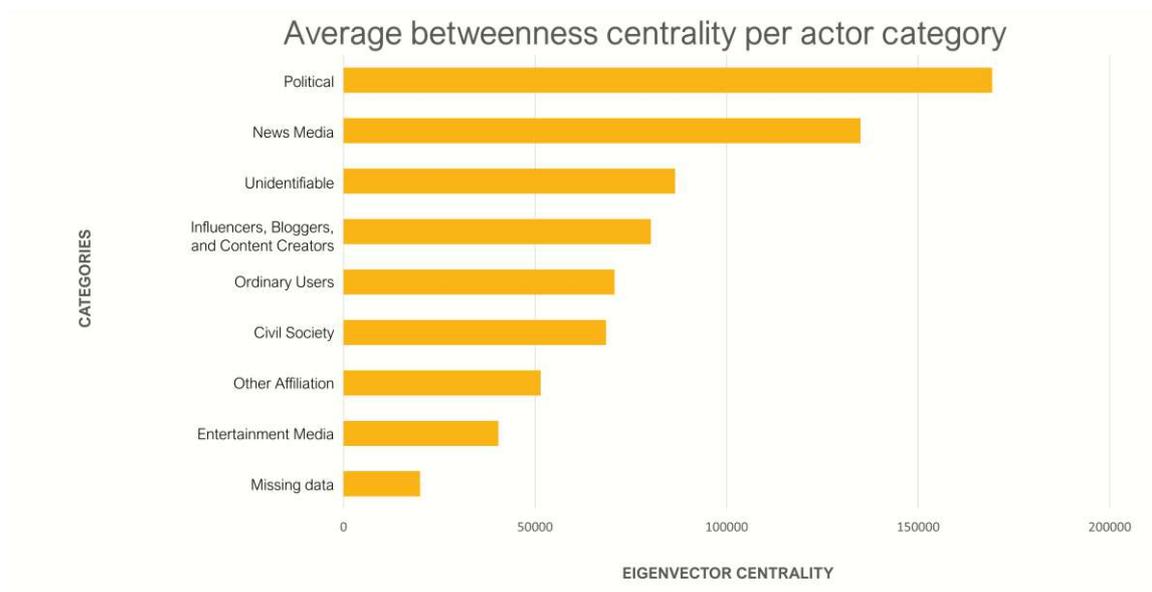


Figure 19. Average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Table 26. *Leading accounts in top actor categories based on betweenness centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Betweenness centrality top actors (Twitter network)		
Political	News media	Influencers, bloggers and content creators
lenirobreo	rapplerdotcom	hampoyjampoy
1sambayan	eicvsfascism	altabscbn
comelec	abscbnnews	buangsonny
dickgordondg	cnnphilippines	graceeverlast
sotto_tito	inquirerdotnet	johnmariomag

Looking at betweenness centralities per quarter, politicians served as the bridge of different, distinct, and possibly diverging communities in Q1, Q2, and Q4, but experienced a significant decrease during Q3 (Figure 20). Specific political actors that were top-ranked in every quarter included 1SAMBAYAN (Q1), Robredo (Q2), and Lacson (Q4).

During Q3, entertainment media served as the main broker of information with top actors like Lauren Greenfield, Jim Paredes, and JP Habac (Table 27). Media institutions such as ABS-CBN News, Rappler, and PhilStar News also had high average betweenness centrality and experienced their peak during Q4.

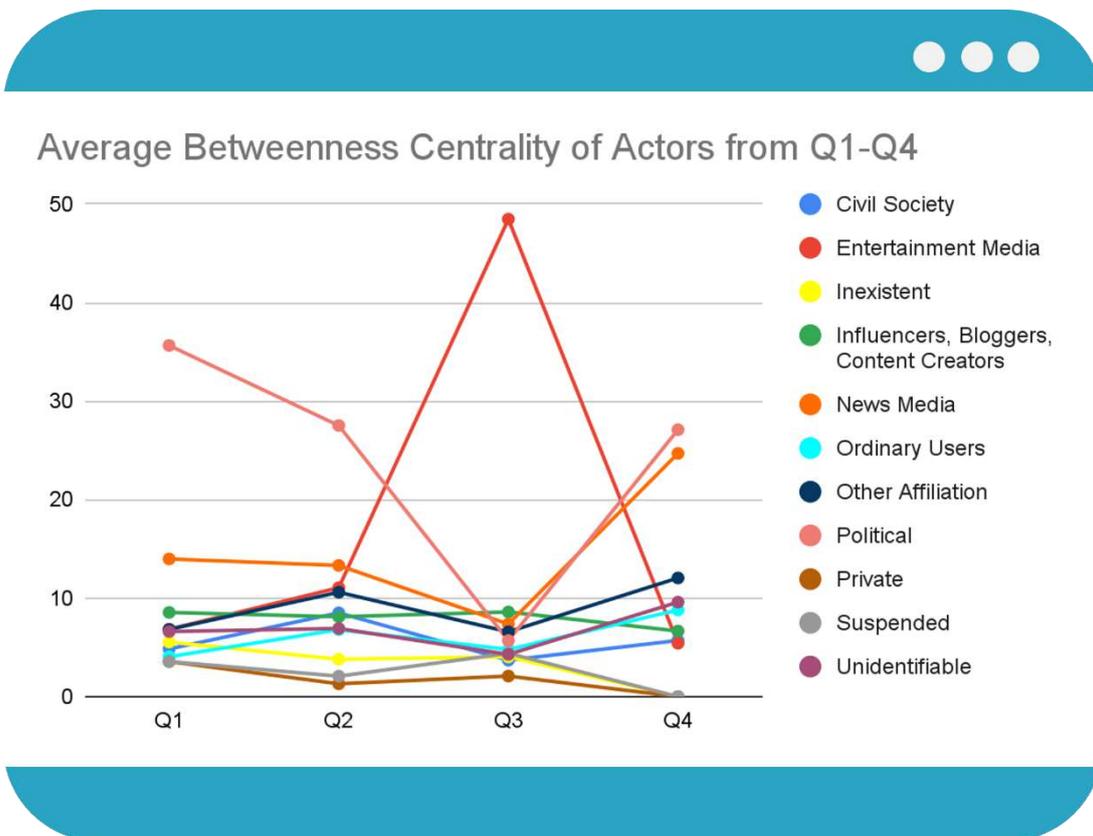


Figure 20. Quarterly average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

Table 27. *Leading accounts in top actor categories per quarter based on betweenness in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Betweenness centrality top actors per quarter (Twitter network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Political	Political	Entertainment media	Political
1sambayan	lenirobreo	lgreen66	iampinglacson
cheldiokno	jabjimenez	jimparedes	comelec
jabjimenez	dickgordondg	_beadel	sotto_tito
koalisyon22ph	bongbongmarcos	guingonabart	lenirobreo
senkokopimentel	waldenbello	jphabac	usapinglacson
News media	News media	Influencers, bloggers, content creators	News media
sirrenzaavedra	abscbnnews	mang_inasar	rapplerdotcom
markgeronimo_	rapplerdotcom	pinoyakoblog	inquirerdotnet
pinoyakoblog	inquirerdotnet	supernegatrona	cnnphilippines
kevinkalbo	onenewsph	hannahbarrantes	abscbnnews
andy_crush	mannyacquiao	floydtena	philstarnews
Influencers, bloggers, content creators	Entertainment media	News media	Other affiliation
phlnewsinsider	freddieroach	rapplerdotcom	twitterph
alienobserver8	markmagsayo_mmm	abscbnnews	eicvsfascism
pinoyakoblog	kowalerts	inquirerdotnet	ronaldgem
marortoll	abscbnpr	gmanews	gerrycacanindin
1023_andrew	guingonabart	philstarnews	melbert15227228

Eigenvector centrality

Popular users interacted the most regarding Robredo, Marcos Jr., Pangilinan, COMELEC, and other political actors.

News media, aside from having high weighted in-degree and out-degree, were also among the top actor categories with high average eigenvector centrality. Rappler, Inquirer, and ABS-CBN News were among the top news media actors.

Following news media were entertainment media actors like IWantTFC, Netflix PH, Showtime, Audie Gemora, and Lauren Greenfield (Table 28).

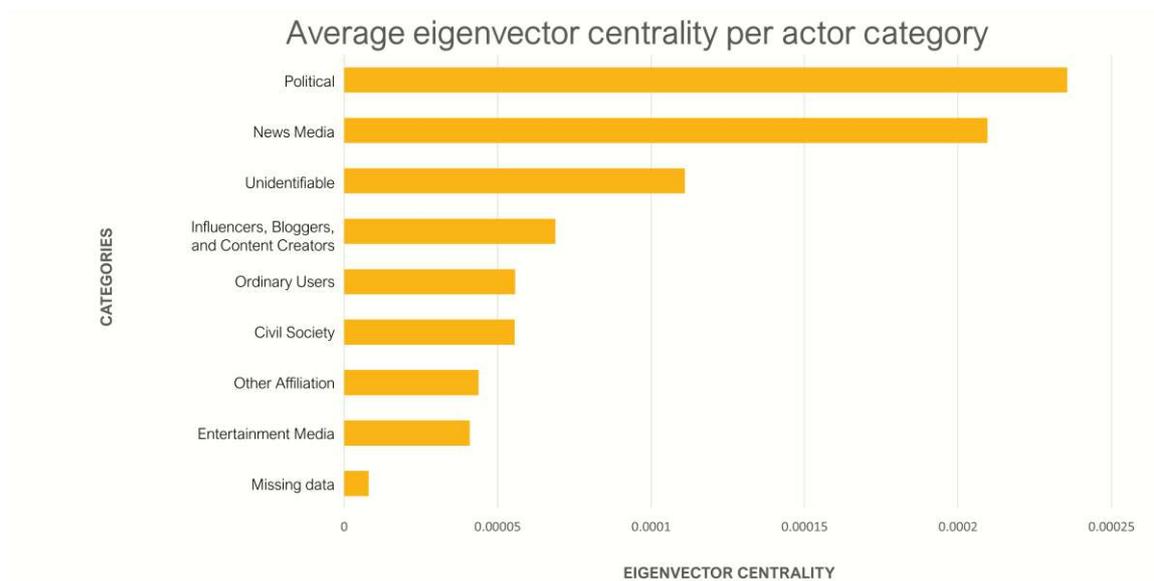


Figure 21. *Average eigenvector centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Table 28. *Leading accounts in top actor categories based on eigenvector centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Eigenvector centrality top actors (Twitter network)		
Political	News Media	Entertainment Media
lenirobrede	rapplerdotcom	iwanttfc
comelec	inquirerdotnet	lgreen66
kikopangilinan	abscbnnews	netflix_ph
cheldiokno	philippinestar	showtime
bongbongmarcos	maracepeda	gemoraaudie

Zooming in per quarter, influencers and politicians served as the center of attention from other popular users during Q1 (Figure 22). Top influencers that had high eigenvector centrality scores included *pinoyakoblog*, *krizzy_kalerqui*, and *markgeronimo_* (Table 29).

Politicians increased in Q2 and Q4 while influencers dropped below news media during Q2. Other significant changes in the network included entertainment media like Lauren Greenfield and Netflix PH being the center of attention from other users in Q3, and news media peaking in eigenvector centrality score in Q4.

Table 29. *Leading accounts in top actor categories per quarter based on eigenvector in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network*

Betweenness centrality top actors per quarter (Twitter network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Influencers, Bloggers, Content Creators	Political	Entertainment media	News media
sirrenzaavedra	lenirobreo	lgreen66	rapplerdotcom
markgeronimo_	bongbongmarcos	netflix_ph	inquirerdotnet
kevinkalbo	sotto_tito	iwanttfc	abscbnnews
pinoyakoblog	kikopangilinan	showtime	maracepeda
krizzy_kalerqui	iskomoreno	dogwoof	philippinestar
Political	News media	Political	Political
cheldiokno	rapplerdotcom	comelec	comelec
lenirobreo	inquirerdotnet	rowena_guanzon	lenirobreo
1sambayan	abscbnnews	lenirobreo	kikopangilinan
sotto_tito	philippinestar	bongbongmarcos	jabjimenez
mannyacquiao	onenewsph	jabjimenez	bongbongmarcos
News media	Civil Society	News media	Entertainment media
abscbnnews	ronaldgem	rapplerdotcom	gemoraaudie
rapplerdotcom	impactph2019	philstarnews	awrabriguelaaa
inquirerdotnet	bahaghari_ph	inquirerdotnet	sb19official
ancalerts	attymatula	philippinestar	donnypangilinan
cnnphilippines	ust_csc	cnnphilippines	richardjuan

Key findings

News media were still the main source of political information for Twitter users

As a group, news media were retweeted, replied to, quoted, and mentioned the most during the election year. In particular, privately-owned mainstream media (e.g. Rappler, Inquirer, ABS-CBN News) were the most popular and had the highest interactions in the network.

News media also had high average weighted out-degree scores which might be due to media institutions using Twitter's features such as mentions, replies, retweets, and quote retweets whenever they "live tweet" events. Media institutions like Rappler also frequently followed up their reports or added context to stories by replying to the main tweet on their account.

Entertainment media and personalities helped mainstream political agendas

In Q3, entertainment media showed an increase in interactions and served as the main bridge between different communities. Lauren Green's Kingmaker became a talking point this quarter due to clamor from anti-Marcos Twitter users to release the Kingmaker on streaming platforms such as Netflix.

Entertainment personalities also served as a focal point of interaction among highly central users, as they were third in the list of actor categories with the highest eigenvector scores in Q4. This indicated the discursive power they held in matters unrelated to entertainment, such as politics.

Obscure accounts were still among the most engaged users but there was noticeably lesser activity in Q3 compared to other quarters

Twitter suspended around 300 accounts in the Marcos network during this quarter due to violating Twitter's platform manipulation and spam policy (Baizas, 2022). Another investigation by Rappler reported that supporters of Marcos Jr. utilized newly-created and revived accounts to make hashtags trend and spread propaganda work on Twitter (Baizas, Macaraeg, & Salcedo, 2022).

Network communities

The election year network on Twitter had 11 major clusters that made up 76.67% of the network. Several distinct clusters converging around Robredo and Marcos Jr. official and affiliated accounts were observed (Table 30). Robredo-aligned clusters made up almost half of the network – Cluster 1 (C1) and Cluster 2 (C2) combined comprised 48.04% of the network.

C1 was composed of Robredo's official account, her allies, and other affiliated officials. C1 was also made up of privately-owned mainstream media and their audiences, while C2 was mostly composed of her other allies like Chel Diokno and supporters.

In comparison to Robredo-aligned communities, Marcos Jr. communities appeared smaller on Twitter. His official account, together with state-owned and religious-affiliated media, was found in C3 (6.25%) and C11 with Marcos Jr. supporters together with other candidates (1.51%).

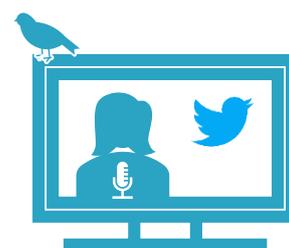
Robredo-aligned clusters were consistently the largest clusters throughout the quarters except in Q2 when a distinct Marcos-aligned cluster emerged (Table 31). Topics within the Robredo-aligned clusters contained statements of support for the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem, tweets about the grand rallies and sorties, performances of other candidates, election-related events, and criticisms against Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte.



Marcos Jr.-aligned clusters had grown from having little presence in Q1 to overtaking a Robredo-aligned cluster in Q2. From Q2 up to Q4, Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts merged with Duterte-aligned accounts. Topic modeling revealed that these clusters focused on amplifying Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte’s lead in surveys, hyping the political rallies, and resharing content related to the tandem. Negative attacks against the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem, members of the opposition, and mainstream news media were also consistently part of the topics in these clusters.

News media were scattered in different communities and were grouped together with different political actors. Mainstream news media outlets like Rappler, ABS-CBN News, CNN, and Inquirer were often connected with Robredo-aligned accounts. On the other hand, Marcos Jr.-aligned clusters commonly contained religious-affiliated media SMNI and government-owned media PTV.

During the early part of the election year, privately-owned mainstream news media like Rappler, ABS-CBN News, and Philippine Star each had their own communities with their audiences. In Q3 and Q4, these privately-owned



mainstream news media started to merge together with Robredo-aligned accounts. GMA News, on the other hand, was consistently in a separate cluster from other privately-owned mainstream news media.

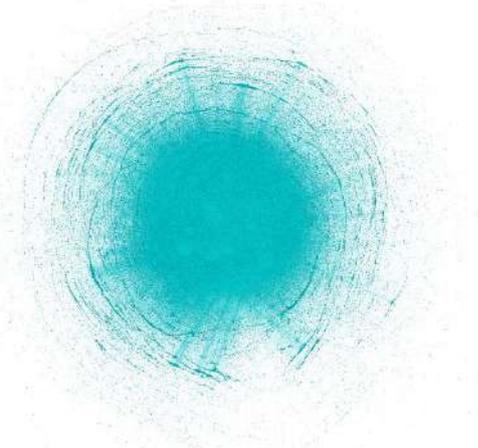
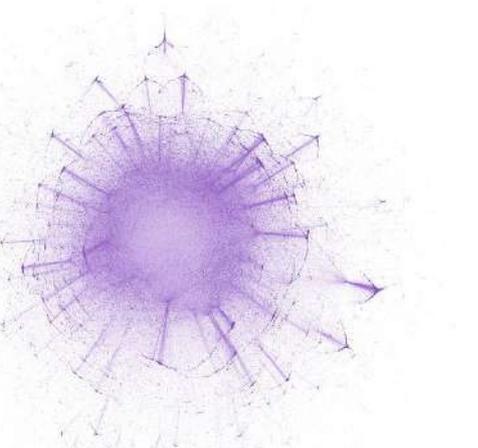
Pacquiao had his own community with sports-related media and users, specifically boxing-related accounts. In this cluster, topics were about Pacquiao's boxing career and his presidential candidacy. Other candidates like Moreno, Lacson, and Sotto III commonly converged in one cluster or merged with Robredo-aligned clusters and/or Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts. In Q2, Moreno was included in the Robredo-aligned cluster, which might be due to Robredo-aligned accounts reacting to Moreno's continuous tirades against Robredo.

Entertainment media and personalities maintained their presence throughout the quarters with their own distinct communities. In Q3, entertainment media along with Robredo-aligned user accounts were the largest cluster. Pertinent topics in these clusters included celebrities filing COCs, celebrity endorsements of political candidates, performance of candidates, and statements of support for the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem. Socially progressive groups and activists were also active on Twitter but their community was small compared to other clusters in the network.

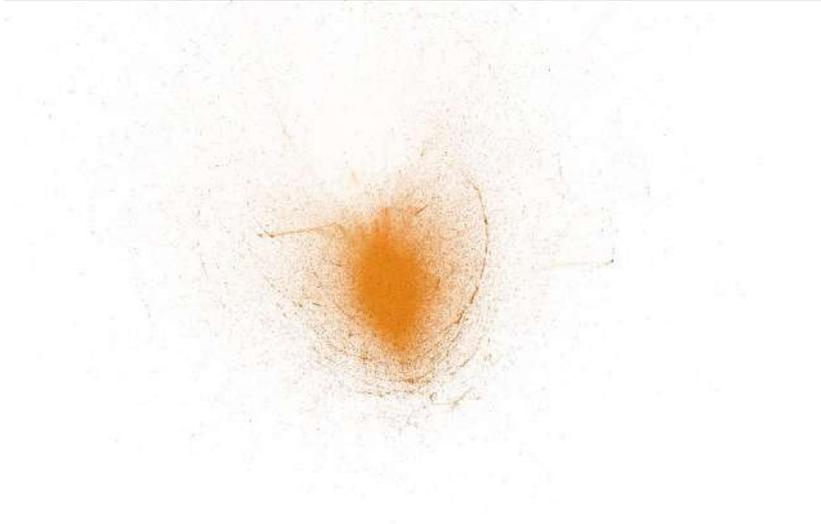


Interestingly, there was an emergence of a foreign cluster (C10) in the election year network. In the previous quarters, the only foreign-related clusters were those of international news media and Pacquiao's boxing cluster. The actors in this separate foreign cluster in the election year were mostly ordinary user accounts and news media. Upon further inspection, these foreign users seemed to have used Philippine election-related keywords in their previous tweets. This could either be foreign news media reporting about the Philippine elections and other foreign users reacting to it, or foreign users randomly using Philippine election-related keywords in their tweets for more exposure.

Table 30. 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network communities and their corresponding top actors, May 2021 to May 2022

TWITTER	
Network visualization	Top accounts
Cluster 1: Privately-owned mainstream news media, Robredo official account, and their audiences (26.30%)	
	<p><i>Top accounts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet abscbnnews maracepeda lenirobredo comelec philstarnews cnnphilippines manilabulletin news5ph
Cluster 2: Diokno official account, news media, and Robredo-aligned ordinary user accounts (21.74%)	
	<p><i>Top accounts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheldiokno kcbriering sirrenzaavedra itsjuliolegaspi jerrbae laratyan zoraldeale markgeronimo_ ptrckcnpt mrfrankbaraan

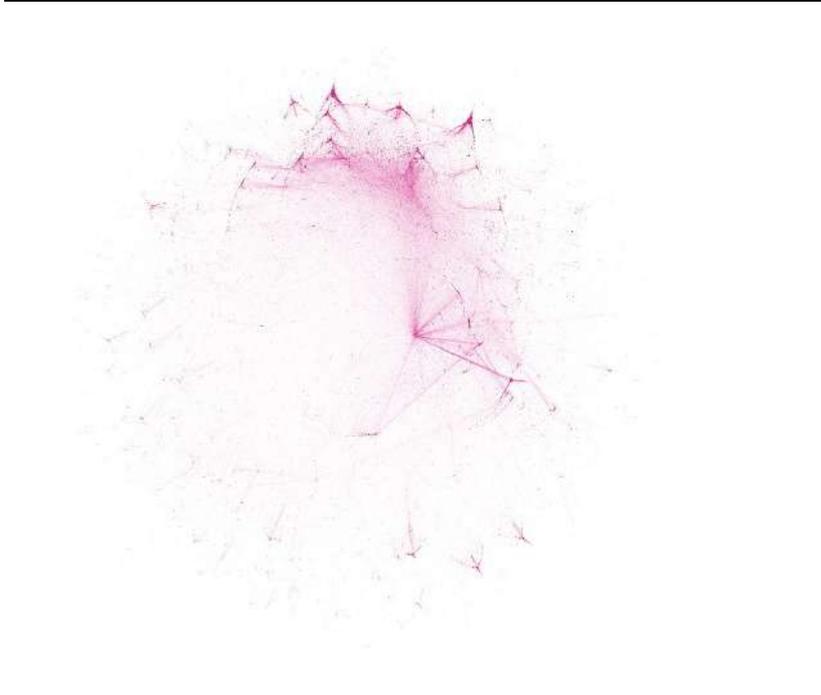
Cluster 3: Marcos Jr. official account, Marcos Jr./Duterte-aligned accounts, and news media (6.25%)



Top accounts

- bongbongmarcos
- smnnews
- kimindar
- edupunay
- winwineklabu
- lakasngtimog
- ptvph
- inareformina
- lakas_cmdph
- indaysara

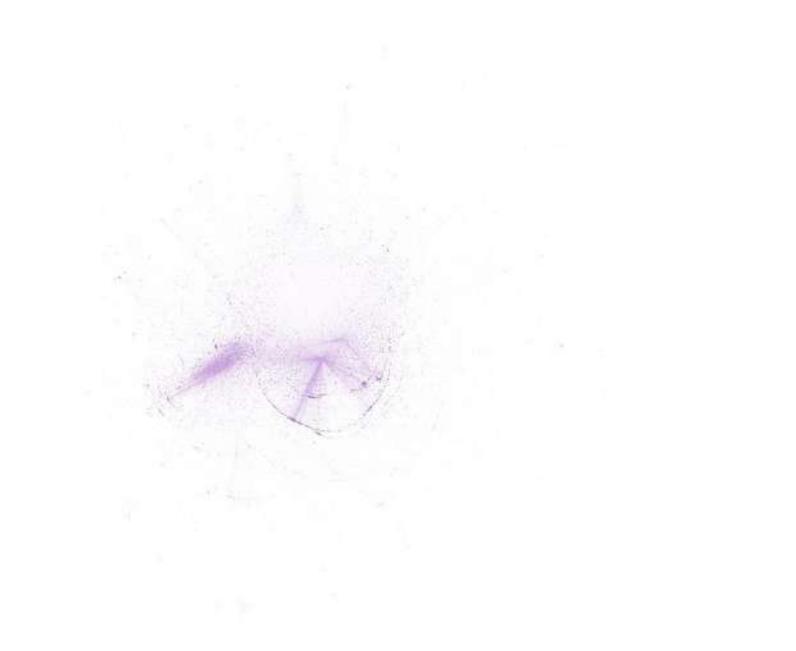
Cluster 4: Pacquiao official account, sports-related news media, and boxing-related user accounts (5.78%)



Top accounts

- mannyacquiao
- youtube
- espringside
- sportscenter
- bleacherreport
- michaelbensonn
- real_clocktower
- pbconfox
- espn
- mpac_foundation

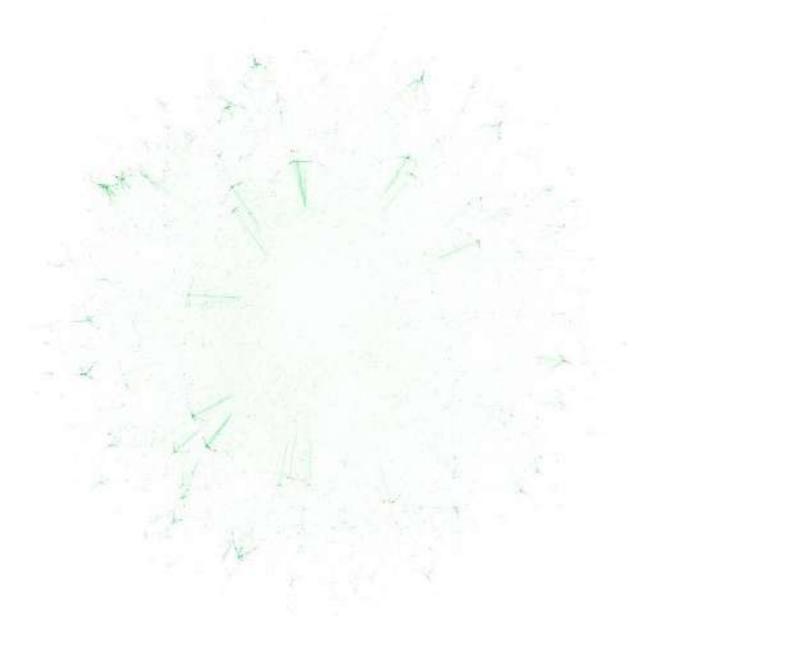
Cluster 5: News media, entertainment personalities and their supporters (3.47%)



Top accounts

philippinestar
jvrmateo
miguelmaual
dannyangilinan
philstarlife
koyalerts
donatorsph
bellemariano02
banderaphl
phtvandfilmupd

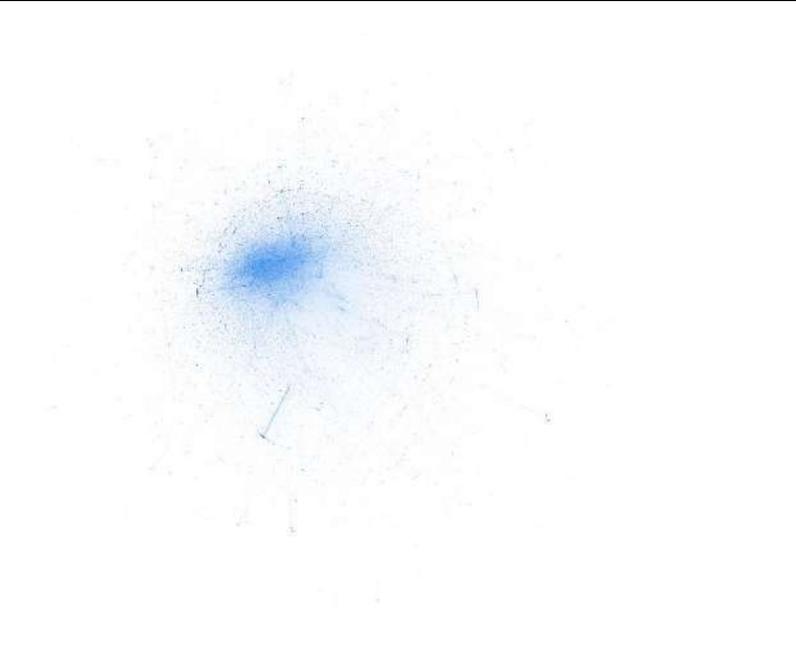
Cluster 6: International news media with local government agencies and officials (3.20%)



Top accounts

afp
reuters
time
business
ajenglish
nikkeiasia
ap
mcfaul
lito_atienza
washingtonpost

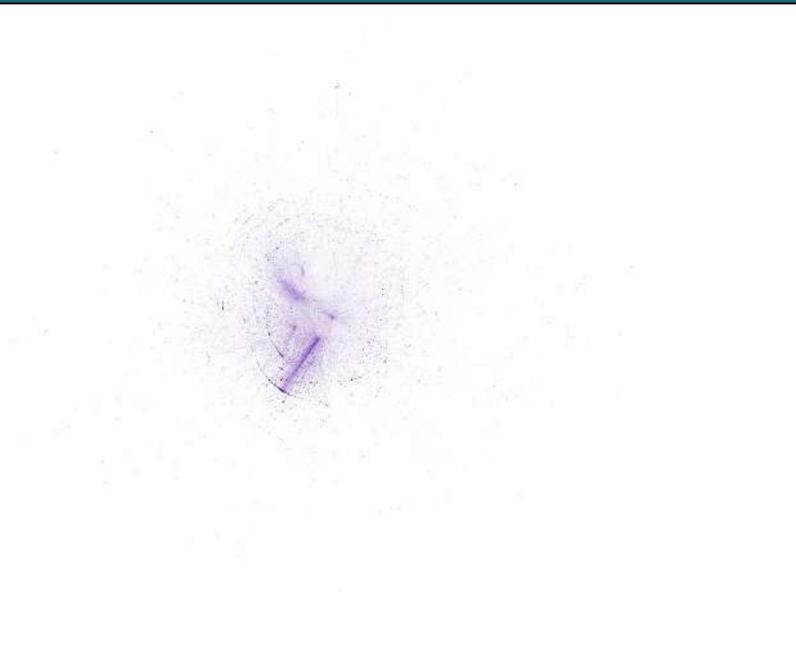
Cluster 7: De Guzman, Bello and Labog official accounts, activists, and socially progressive groups (3.02%)



Top accounts

leodymanggagawa
kabonglabog
waldenbello
iamraoulmanuel
sarahelago
natoreyes
rosereyde
bahaghari_ph
jcrwyn
kabataanpl

Cluster 8: Moreno and Espiritu official accounts, GMA News, and their audiences (2.08%)



Top accounts

gmanews
iskomoreno
piaranada
katrinadomingo
sandraguinaldo
gmanewsbreaking
lukeespirituph
tinapperez
thechronicleph
gma_pa

Cluster 9: Entertainment media and ordinary user accounts (1.80%)



Top accounts

- lgreen66
- iwanttfc
- netflix_ph
- showtime
- dogwoof
- reportrdotworld
- lyndajumilla
- aksis_pisay
- ebotoph
- potato__carrot

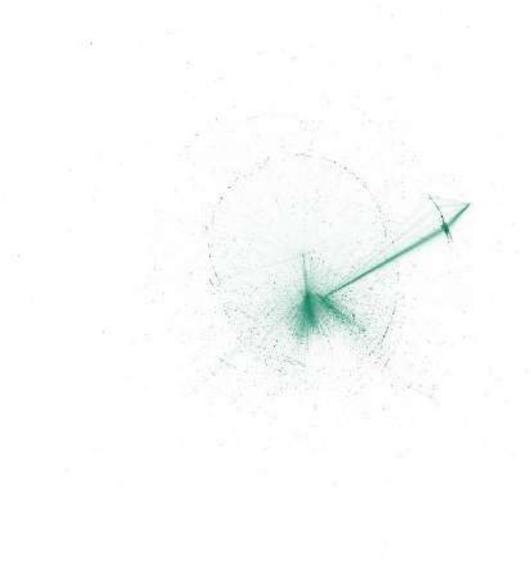
Cluster 10: Foreign user accounts (1.52%)



Top accounts

- faizalhamssin
- maspiyuaja
- geloraco
- keuangannews_id
- oposisicerdas
- zarazettirazr
- rizkon_halalan
- kompascom
- putrawadapi
- nitizen0165

Cluster 11: Lacson and Sotto official accounts, 1SAMBAYAN, and Marcos Jr. aligned ordinary user accounts (1.51%)



Top accounts

sotto_tito
iampinglacson
1sambayan
growlharhar
yesyesyo13
love_meow_24
baldugho
nilesneel
bhevzkyren
dickgordong

Key findings

The attachment of specific news media to political candidates indicated the preferred sources of information of candidate supporters

Privately-owned media outlets like Rappler, ABS-CBN News, and Inquirer were typically found in a cluster with Robredo-aligned accounts, while religious-affiliated media like SMNI and state-owned news media like PTV were usually with Marcos-aligned accounts.



Robredo-aligned accounts appeared to be news reading audiences, based on their integration with privately-owned mainstream news sources, while Marcos-aligned accounts were more attuned to religious-owned and government-owned media, based on their clustering with accounts such as SMNI and PTV.

Mainstream news media was not present in communities where socially progressive groups and activists could be found

This may be indicative of mainstream news media's affinity towards elite political actors or the progressive community's preference for alternative news media as a source of information.

Philippine politics had become entangled with other identities of salient election candidates

This was manifested by Pacquiao and his brokerage of sports and boxing communities. Pacquiao's boxing legacy had led to him becoming a household name, both locally and internationally.

Entertainment media and personalities had the power to influence and mobilize communities for political and personal gains

Entertainment media and personalities had their own community, which might be due to entertainment media producing political content, as well as entertainment personalities running for the elections and being vocal about politics.

The interweaving of entertainment and politics allows for mainstreaming of political ideals and propaganda to the public, whether explicitly or implicitly.



Table 31. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network⁴

	Q1 May to July 2021		Q2 Aug to Oct 2021		Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022		Q4 Feb to May 2022	
	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics
Cluster 1	Diokno official account and ordinary user accounts (25.23%)		Privately owned mainstream news media and their audiences (32.15%)		Entertainment media and Robredo-aligned ordinary user accounts (33.95%)		CNN Philippines and Robredo-aligned ordinary user accounts(29.84%)	
	cheldiokno sirrenzaavedra paopangs sunwon28 markgeronimo_	- Amplifying Robredo's projects during the pandemic -Diokno's credentials and stance on different political issues -Calls to vote critically and responsibly	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet abscbnnews maracedpeda cnnphilippines	- Filing of certificate of candidacies (COCs) - Coverage of Pharmally issue -Reactions towards the official announcements of candidacies	lgreen66 netflix_ph iwanttfc showtime dogwoof	-Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case and former COMELEC commissioner Rowena Guanzon's vote to disqualify him -Ranking of the presidential aspirants' performance during the Jessica Soho Presidential Debates -Rationalizing why the people should vote for Robredo	cnnphilippines gideonlasco kcbrierinq itsjuliolegaspi 13thfool	-Statements of support for Robredo, Pangilinan, and their allies -Partial and unofficial election results from the COMELEC server -Election discrepancies
Cluster 2	The opposition, their supporters and detractors (10.30%)		Pacquiao official account, boxing related accounts, and their audiences (12.16%)		Privately owned mainstream news media,Robredo-aligned accounts, and their audiences (28.9%)		Privately owned mainstream news media, Robredo official account and their audiences (23.75%)	
	1sambayan lenirobredo manilabulletin ogie_rosa pinoyakoblog	-General reminders to register for the elections -Attacks against known members of the opposition and politicians linked to 1SAMBAYAN -Support towards Robredo	mannypacquiao sportscenter bleacherreport espn real_clocktower	-Pacquiao's boxing-related activities - Reactions to the alleged social distancing violations by Pacquiao in his Batangas visit	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet philstarnews maracedpeda manilabulletin	-Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case, pending petitions against his presidential candidacy, and COMELEC's decision -Calls to disqualify BBM from Presidential race -Ambiguous accounts questioning mainstream news media's credibility in defense of the Marcoses	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet maracedpeda abscbnnews lenirobredo	-Reports on the Robredo-Pangilinan campaign -Fact-check reports on Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte -Partial and unofficial election results via the COMELEC server -Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte not joining the COMELEC debates
Cluster 3	ABS-CBN news and their audiences (9.58%)		Philippine Star and ordinary user accounts (11.58%)		Marcos Jr. official account, news media, and Marcos Jr./Duterte aligned accounts (9.68%)		Marcos Jr. official account, Marcos Jr./ Duterte aligned accounts, and news media (8.81%)	
	abscbnnews anacalerts mikenavallo katrinadomingo inareformina	-PDP-Laban internal dispute -COMELEC-related news and updates about the elections as reported by ABS-CBN -Reportage about release of senatorial line-ups, tandems, and alliances	philippinestar onenewsph ptrckcnpt lasang_ blueboytenpack	-Filing of certificates of candidacies (COCs) -Marcos Jr.'s drug test results -Reminders to register to vote for the elections	bongbongmarcos news5ph smnnews kimindar lakasngtimog	-Marcos Jr. supporters' call for clean elections in lieu of COMELEC voter information leak -Tirades against the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem, their campaign, and their supporters -Resharing of Marcos Jr.-Duterte aligned hyperpartisan videos from Youtube	philippinestar manilabulletin bongbongmarcos smnnews kimindar	-Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte's grand rallies in Visayas in Mindanao, mainly the Cebu rally -Supporters confident in Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte's "sure win" in the elections -Marcos Jr.-Duterte supporters attacking the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem and media institutions like Rappler

⁴ Top 3 only. see appendix for the full table

YouTube



YouTube's network is constructed by the YouTube recommendation algorithm, with every channel connected to another based on the 'relatedness' of their video's topics, categories, audiences, and other relevant metadata undisclosed by the platform. The findings exemplify this network character of YouTube.

The first section characterizes the network structure of the 2022 Philippine General Elections algorithmic network. The second section discusses the network actors gauging network influence based on the channels' videos' propensity to be recommended more prominently than others. Finally, the third section presents the key communities formed by the YouTube algorithm based on the stronger similarities of actors in a community with one another compared to the rest of the network, making them more likely to be recommended together.



General findings



News media were the primary source of political information

News media actors were the most recommended channels on the platform across all measures of centrality. They also comprised the largest community in the election network overall, but it should be noted that they had been overtaken by the Marcos Jr.-aligned community in Q3 and Q4.

Their prominence appeared to be driven by their mainstream audience base, the volume of the video content they produce on a daily basis, and the relevance of those videos to popular political topics across the platform.



Marcos Jr. dominated the platform with three distinct communities

Marcos Jr. was overwhelmingly popular on YouTube, from early on in the first quarter as the second largest community and later took a more dominant position in the last two quarters of the election year. His political campaign cemented its ownership of the election network through **three key communities politically aligned with his camp:**

- 1** the mainstream political community composed of religious-owned media, his official channels, and television personalities;
- 2** the entertainment community featuring entertainment media channels and YouTube entertainment influencers; and



the community of hyper-partisan influencers amplifying his campaign on the ground

These communities engaged in hybrid political messaging that blended entertainment and politics, vlogging and political commentary, and old and new forms of political brokerage.



Content creators and influencers increasingly accumulated political capital

YouTube political and news channels and influencers rose as political actors in the network. They ranked right next to institutional actors such as news media, entertainment media, and politicians in various measures of centrality.

Without the discipline expertise or (known) political connections, they leveraged their knowledge of the platform affordances and manage their relationships with their subscribers and viewers to perform compelling political interlocution.

In the Marcos Jr.-aligned communities, influencers were central in buttressing the clusters' prominence in the network by their sheer number and the volume of content they regularly produced related to the campaign or to the elections, more broadly.



Entertainment personalities intervened in political discourse

Entertainment media and personalities were considered VIP actors in the network based on their high pagerank centrality scores. Next to the news media, they were the next most important actors by virtue of their strong connections to the most influential actors in the network. Some of these actors also penetrated the partisan community of Marcos Jr. and consolidated into a separate entertainment cluster

that approached politics from the genre of infotainment and ‘soft’ news and public affairs.

Entertainment media actors served as an entry point for publics to be exposed to political content in forms that were accessible, familiar, and not overtly polarized.

Global network characteristics

The YouTube election network consisted of a total of 6,482 unique YouTube channels and 50,156 algorithmic connections in the form of search results and recommendations (Figure 23). As illustrated in Figure 23, the overall network had a dense center that spread outward towards looser connections.

Some disjointed YouTube channels form a periphery that surrounded the major network communities in the middle and they represented channels that had videos that appeared the least in the network. The network had 10 major clusters (>1%) that comprised 67.55% of the actors in the network.

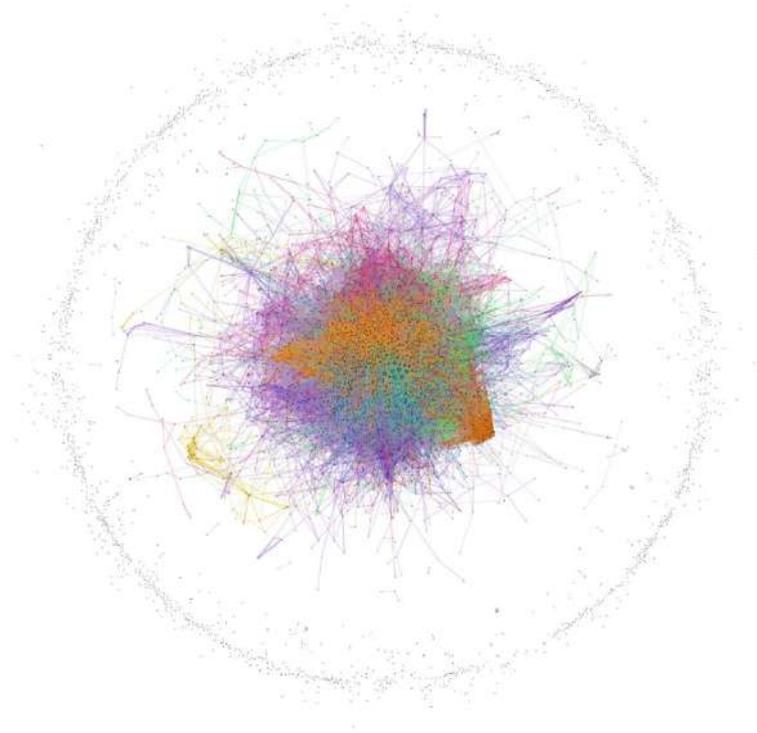


Figure 23. 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network, May 2021 to May 2022

Analyzing the network on a quarterly basis, the YouTube channels that were identified by the algorithm to be related to the relevant election keywords had dramatically increased in numbers from the beginning of the election year to the quarter leading up to election day (see the summary of the metrics in Table 32).

The network in Q1 of the election year had the minimal number of nodes at 650 YouTube channels and 50,156 algorithmic connections, and had an evident community of influential actors at the core (Figures 24).

By Q2, the network expanded by 46% with now 1,407 channels and 18,363 algorithmic connections, and had become denser and expands horizontally, indicating that inclusion of channels that were more distant in relevance to the ones in the center of the network.

The network downsized in Q3 by 13%, with only 1,222 channels and 11,448 algorithmic connections with more sparse connections in one half of the network due to the limited electoral events and issues during that period.

The Q4 network as expected had the largest size with a total of 4,498 YouTube channels and 47,693 algorithmic connections, regaining a highly dense center that dispersed outwards to more distinct clusters.

<p>Figure 24A. <i>2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network, May to July 2021 (Q1)</i></p>	<p>Figure 24B. <i>2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network, Aug to Oct 2021 (Q2)</i></p>
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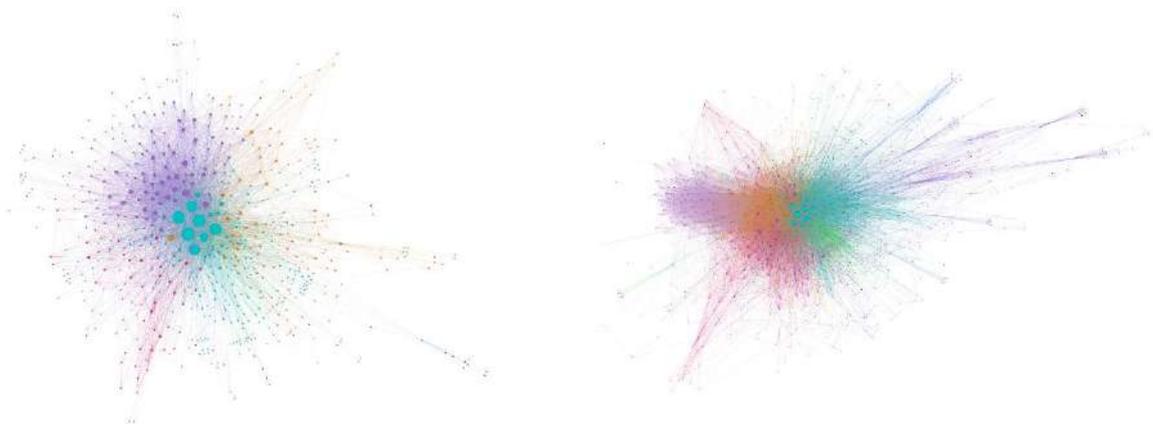


Figure 24C.
2022 Philippine General Elections
YouTube network,
Nov 2021 to Jan 2022 (Q3)

Figure 24D.
2022 Philippine General Elections
YouTube network,
Feb to May 2022 (Q4)

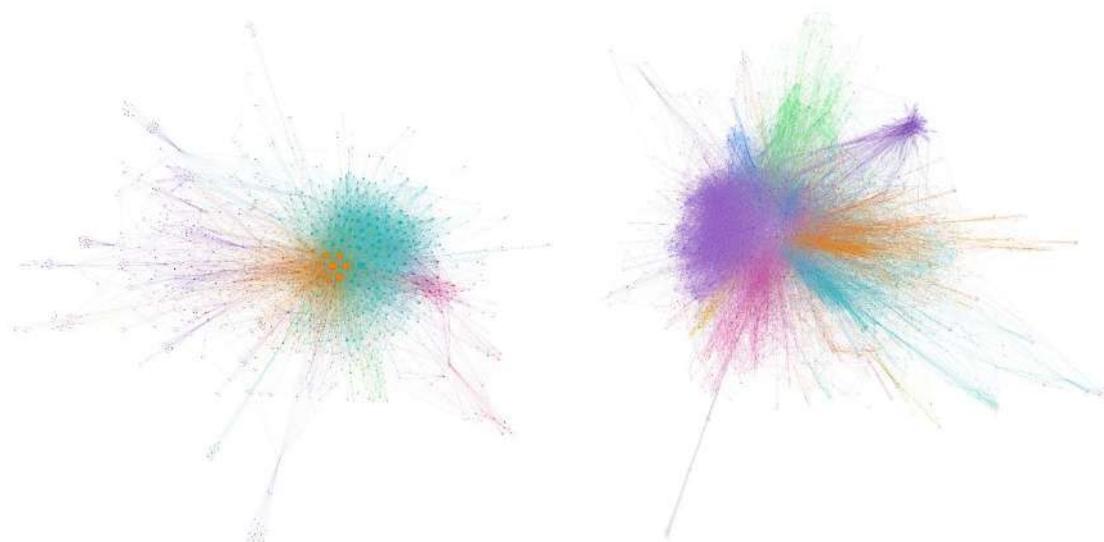


Figure 24. 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network per quarter of the election year

Table 32. Summary of global network metrics of the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Network metrics	Election year May 2021 to May 2022	Q1 May to July 2021	Q2 Aug to Oct 2021	Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022	Q4 Feb to May 2022
Channels	6,482	650	1,407	1,222	4,498
Algorithmic connections	50,156	6,157	18,363	11,448	47,693
Network density	0.001	0.015	0.009	0.008	0.002
Major clusters	10	5	6	6	10
Percentage of network	67.55 %	94.45%	92.89%	93.28%	95.65%

Network composition

In terms of the actor category distribution, the majority of the YouTube election network were YouTube entertainment channels at 53.12% (Figure 25). The next largest actor category was YouTube news and politics channels which took 15.71% of the network, followed by 11.43% composed of influencers and content creators.

The rest of the network was categorized as mostly institutional actors: news media (6.4%), other affiliations (5.7%), entertainment media (4.6%), politicians and government (1.7%), civil society (1.0%), and suspended or terminated channels (0.2%).

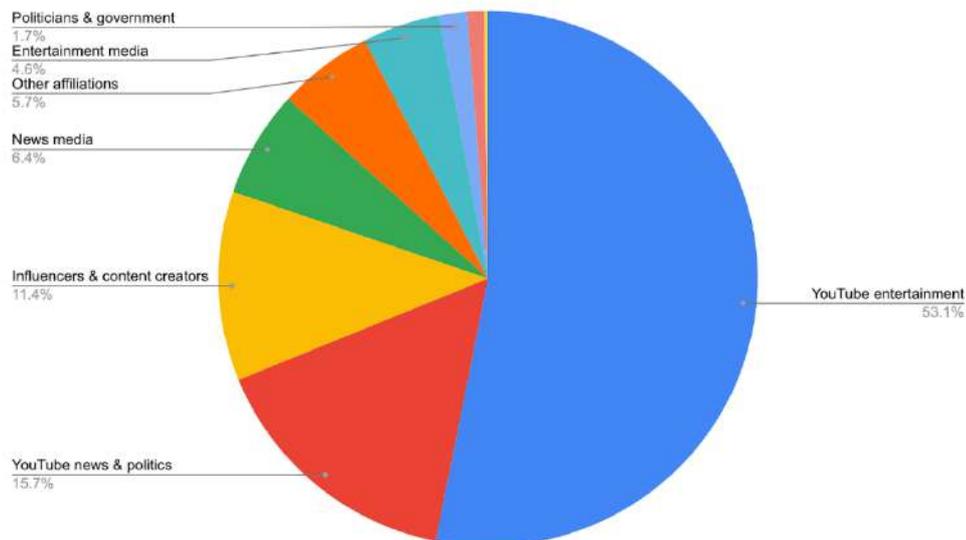


Figure 25. Actor category distribution in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Key findings

YouTube channels and their algorithmic connections in the election network increased six times more from Q1 to Q4 leading to election day.



This indicated a hyperdrive of interest in the topics related to the elections by a more diverse set of actors outside of normative media and political actors.

The network was anchored on a dense center across all quarters but dispersed into its own path of channels farther away from the most salient channels.

Such network structure signalled the diminishing common ground among channels in the network and their increasing insulation within their communities.

YouTube entertainment channels disproportionately comprised the majority of the channels in the election network, exemplifying YouTube's character as an entertainment and content creation platform permeating all discourses on the platform.



YouTube news and politics and influencers and content creators were the next most common category of actors in the network. This strengthened the case of the platform being reappropriated as a source of political knowledge while also being a source of livelihood and profit among micro-celebrities.

Network actors

Degree centrality

Degree centrality is a measure of visibility in the YouTube election network, indicated by the frequency of each channel being recommended in the network.

Throughout the election year, news media was the most recommended actor category in the network (Figure 26). The top five news media actors that yielded the highest degree centrality score were ABS-CBN News, Rappler, ANC 24/7, GMA News, and CNN Philippines, which were mostly institutional media networks and one digital media outlet (Table 33).

YouTube news and political channels were the next most recommended group of actors by the algorithm, the most salient of which were identified to be Marcos Jr.- and Duterte-allied channels. Unlike news media, these channels were not household names but were gaining popularity in the network.

Closely following them were politicians and government officials, with the government media RTV Malacañang and the official YouTube channels of presidential candidates: Bongbong Marcos, Leni Robredo, Team Pacquiao, and Ping Lacson.

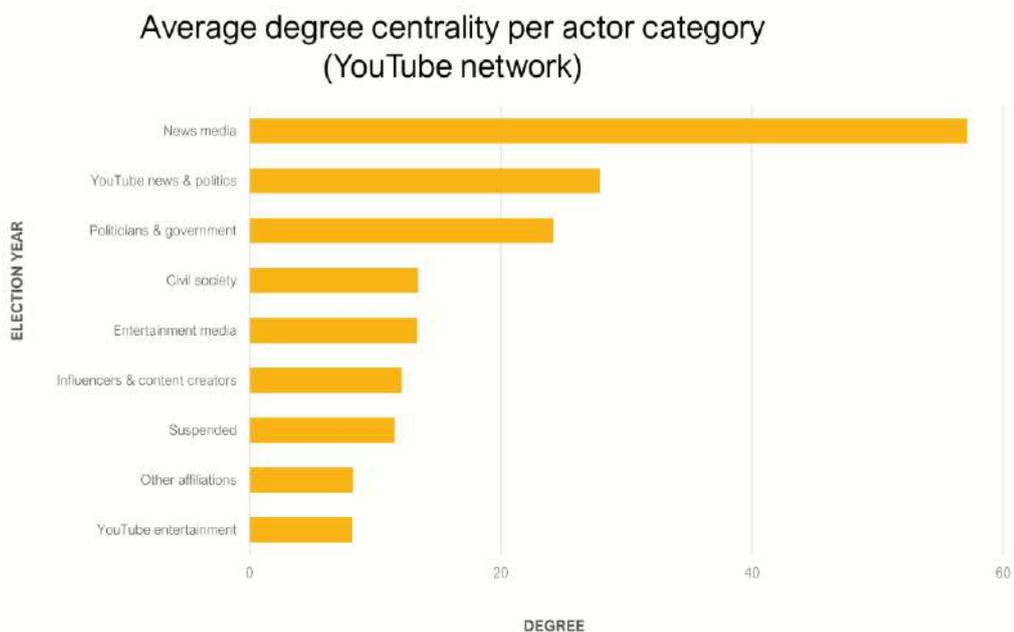


Figure 26. Average degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 33. Leading channels in top actor categories based on degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Degree centrality top actors (YouTube network)		
News media	Youtube news & politics	Politicians & government
ABS-CBN News	Showbiz Fanaticz	RTVMalacanang
Rappler	SHOWBIZ CHIKA-DORO	Bongbong Marcos
ANC 24/7	PH Latest	Leni Robredo
GMA News	PINAS INSIDER	Team Pacquiao
CNN Philippines	PweDelie TV	Ping Lacson

The quarterly rankings of the actor categories based on degree centrality followed the same pattern in the election year with news media actors as the most recommended actor category (Figure 27). Apart from the top news media actors in the election year, religious UNTV News and Rescue and government-owned PTV were also one of the most recommended news organizations (Table 34).

It was also notable that the politicians and government actor category was in the second rank in the first two quarters of the election year, but it was outranked by the YouTube news and politics actor category in Q3 and Q4. Among the top politicians and government actors, Bongbong Marcos and RTVMalacañang were consistently salient across the quarters, and Senate of the Philippines, Inday Sara Duterte and local Davao City politician Marissa Abella were new entrants in the top five.

Remarkably, the leading actors in the YouTube news and politics category varied from one quarter to another, which might indicate the fluctuating influence of individual content creators while emphasizing their agility to supplant themselves in political discourse.

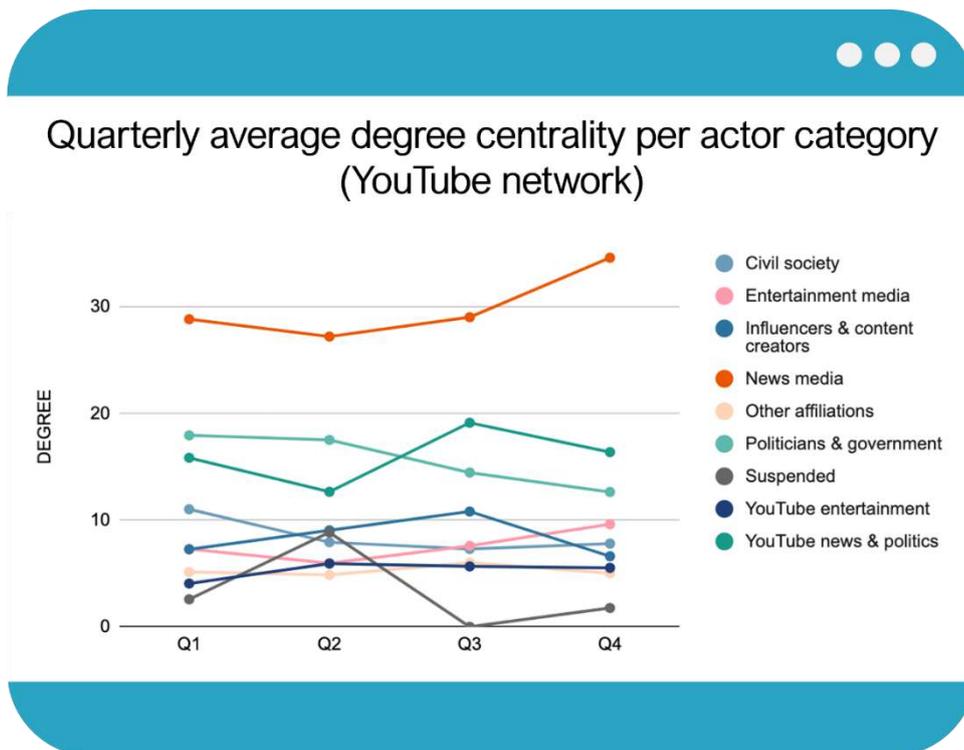


Figure 27. Quarterly average degree centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 34. *Leading channels in top actor categories per quarter based on degree centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network*

Degree centrality top actors per quarter (YouTube network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
News media	News media	News media	News media
ABS-CBN	ANC 24/7	ABS-CBN News	Rappler
GMA News	ABS-CBN	ANC 24/7	GMA News
ANC 24/7	Rappler	UNTV News and Rescue	ABS-CBN News
Rappler	GMA News	Rappler	ANC 24/7
CNN Philippines	UNTV News & Rescue	PTV	UNTV News and Rescue
Politicians & government	Politicians & government	Youtube news & politics	Youtube news & politics
RTVMalacanang	Bongbong Marcos	USAPANG BALITA TV	PH Latest
Team Pacquiao	RTVMalacanang	JIL Review TV	Showbiz Fanaticz
Bongbong Marcos	Team Pacquiao	PH Update	PINAS INSIDER
Ping Lacson	Leni Robredo	PINAS INSIDER	USAPANG BALITA TV
Leni Robredo	Senate of the Philippines	PH Latest	Robin Sweet Showbiz
Youtube news & politics	Youtube news & politics	Politicians & government	Politicians & government
BANAT NEWS TV	SHOWBIZ CHIKA-DORO	Bongbong Marcos	Bongbong Marcos
JUST in BALITA	TROPANG BISAYA	Ping Lacson	RTVMalacanang
Showbiz Fanaticz	Showbiz Fanaticz	RTVMalacanang	Leni Robredo
Robin Sweet Showbiz	Euphoniaco TV	Senate of the Philippines	Marissa Abella TV
Filipino Future	Filipino Future	Inday Sara Duterte	Team Pacquiao

Betweenness centrality

Betweenness centrality is a metric used to identify channels that serve as bridges between a set of channels to another.

Similar to degree centrality, news media actors yielded the highest betweenness centrality score, which indicated their influence over the flow of information in the network (Figure 28). The top channels for this centrality measure were the same ones previously mentioned, ABS-CBN News, GMA News and Rappler, ANC 24/7, and a new entrant, UNTV News and Rescue (Table 35).

Far second is the politicians and government actor category, with RTVMalacañang, Bongbong Marcos, Team Pacquiao, DepEd Philippines, and Leni Robredo being the most connected channels across the network.

Civil society channels were also gaining ground in their betweenness centrality scores, including international non-profit organization TED, election watchdogs NAMFREL Bantay ng Bayan, international educational organization Asia Society, religious leader Apollo Quiboloy and Catholic media channel Divine Word Media PH topping this actor category.

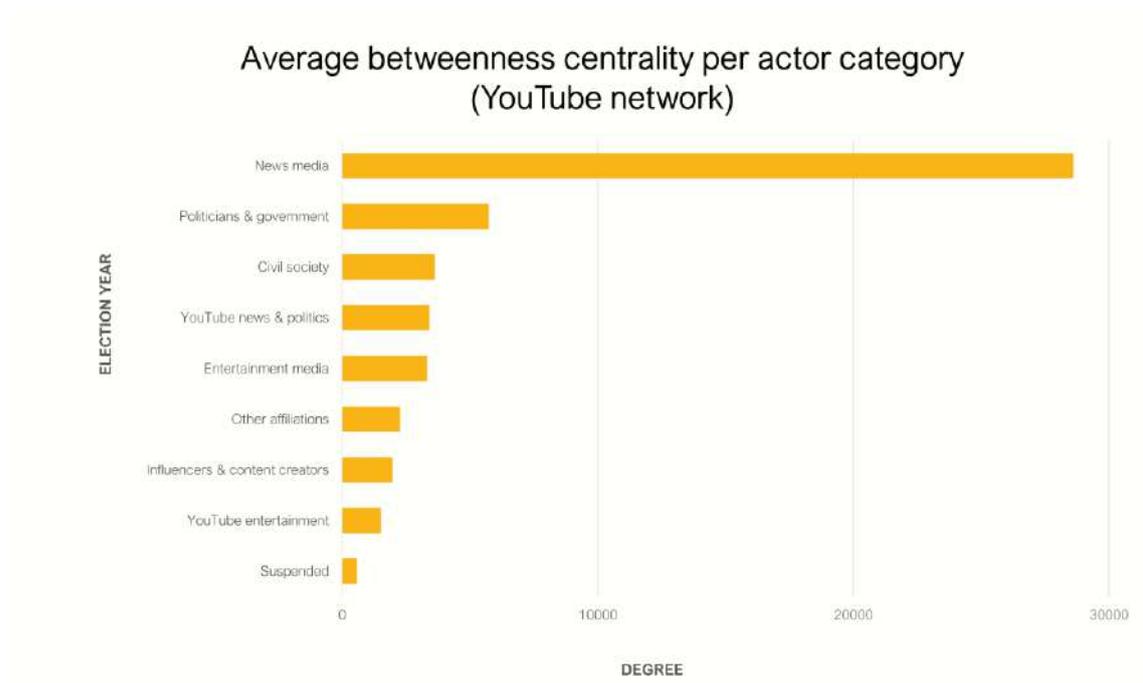


Figure 28. Average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 35. Leading channels in top actor categories based on betweenness centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Betweenness centrality top actors (YouTube network)		
News media	Politicians & government	Civil society
ABS-CBN News	RTVMalacañang	TED
GMA News	Bongbong Marcos	NAMFREL Bantay ng Bayan
Rappler	Team Pacquiao	Asia Society
ANC 24/7	DepEd Philippines	Apollo Quiboloy
UNTV News and Rescue	Leni Robredo	Divine Word Media PH

From a quarterly perspective, news media maintained its dominance in terms of its connectedness to other channels in the network (Figure 29), with INQUIRER.net and CNN Philippines making it to the top 5 in Q2 and Q3, respectively (Table 36).

It was again followed by the politicians and government channels, with Bongbong Marcos and RTVMalacañang as the two channels that maintained their ‘gateway’ role in the network. Other presidential candidates made an appearance, but only for a certain period such as Team Pacquiao who only showed up in Q1 and Q2, Leni Robredo in Q2, and Ping Lacson in Q3.

There was a fluctuation in the third-ranking position for betweenness centrality across the quarters. During the first and last quarter, entertainment media leveraged as the third-ranking linker of channels, with ABS-CBN entertainment, Ogie Diaz, and Toni Gonzaga Studio (formerly Celestine Gonzaga-Soriano) as the actors that were constantly well connected to the network.

Meanwhile, civil society channels only temporarily superseded entertainment media channels in Q2, but it was shortly overtaken by YouTube news and politics in Q3.

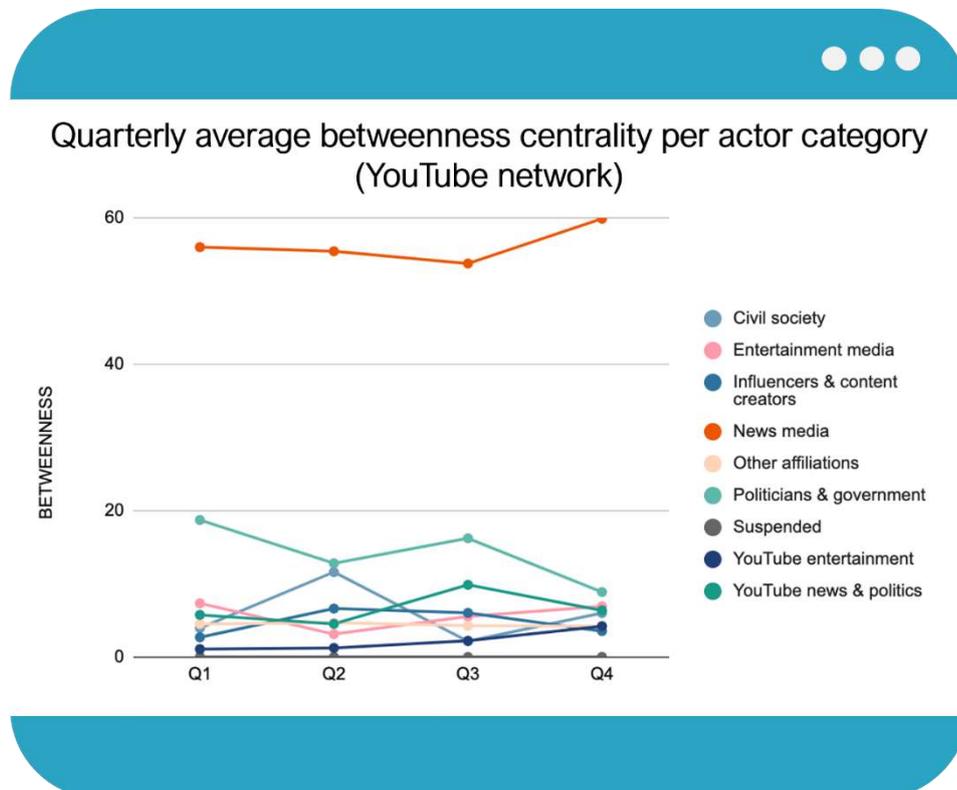


Figure 29. Quarterly average betweenness centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 36. *Leading channels in top actor categories per quarter based on betweenness centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network*

Weighted out-degree centrality top actors per quarter (Facebook network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities	Fb group - political communities
VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	(special characters)-	Leni Robredo Para sa Pilipino	5096548220359550
President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022!	Friends Who Like MBY Pet Rescue and Sanctuary	Leni for President Movement	1203728010022030
"LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL)	TEAM KUYA OGIE T.K.O. (special characters)	PUP Community for Leni	2965765013704510
OPINYONG TUNAY	Politics (#2)	VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends	Anyone But Leni
Real Talk! Philippine National Election 2022	Pilipinas Kong Mahal (#3)	BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS	Progressive Philippines 2028
News media	News media	News media	FB group - other communities
rapplerdotcom	rapplerdotcom	manilabulletin	855045975388829
inquirerdotnet	abscbnNEWS	rapplerdotcom	1318720581564430
globaldailymirror	inquirerdotnet	inquirerdotnet	169670311241135
ONENewsPH	PhilippineSTAR	abscbnNEWS	215245440758950
PTVph	manilabulletin	PhilippineSTAR	834987850511549
Unavailable pages	FB group - other communities	FB group - other communities	FB page - politics and current affairs
PhilippineNews01	(special characters)	jenlisa	europeforleniforpresident
thepandorasbox.ph	Catholic Answers	LJ Louis Miss Haiti 2013	MesaTabloidPH
AksyonKo	RPW : BUYING, SELLING, TRADING, HANDLING AND ETC.	Pageantry Fanatics	ken.daduma.pay
dabigcradioofficial	TAGOLOAN FISH KEEPERS.(betta,guppy ,Goldfish)	TAGOLOAN FISH KEEPERS.(betta,guppy, Goldfish)	CawayanForLeni
OfficialMBB2019	gv gada and gv kathleen	168 / 999 / DRAGON 8 / 11-88 DIRECT SUPPLIER	MayPakiAko

Pagerank centrality

The next measure of influence is pagerank centrality. This metric is indicative of the channels' relative importance, given their relatedness to channels with high degree centrality scores.

News media again ranked the highest in pagerank centrality, potentially as a product of its high degree centrality. The top channels for news media (Figure 30) included ABS-CBN News, GMA News, Rappler, CNN Philippines, and UNTV News and Rescue (Table 37).

Closely following were entertainment media, with Alex Gonzaga-Official, Toni Gonzaga Studio, Ogie Diaz, ABS-CBN Entertainment, and The Boy Abunda Talk Channel.

Politicians and government office channels like RTVMalacañang, Bongbong Marcos, Team Pacquiao, Leni Robredo, and Election on Commission of India (related by virtue of election topics) were the third-ranking actor category that yielded a high average pagerank centrality score.

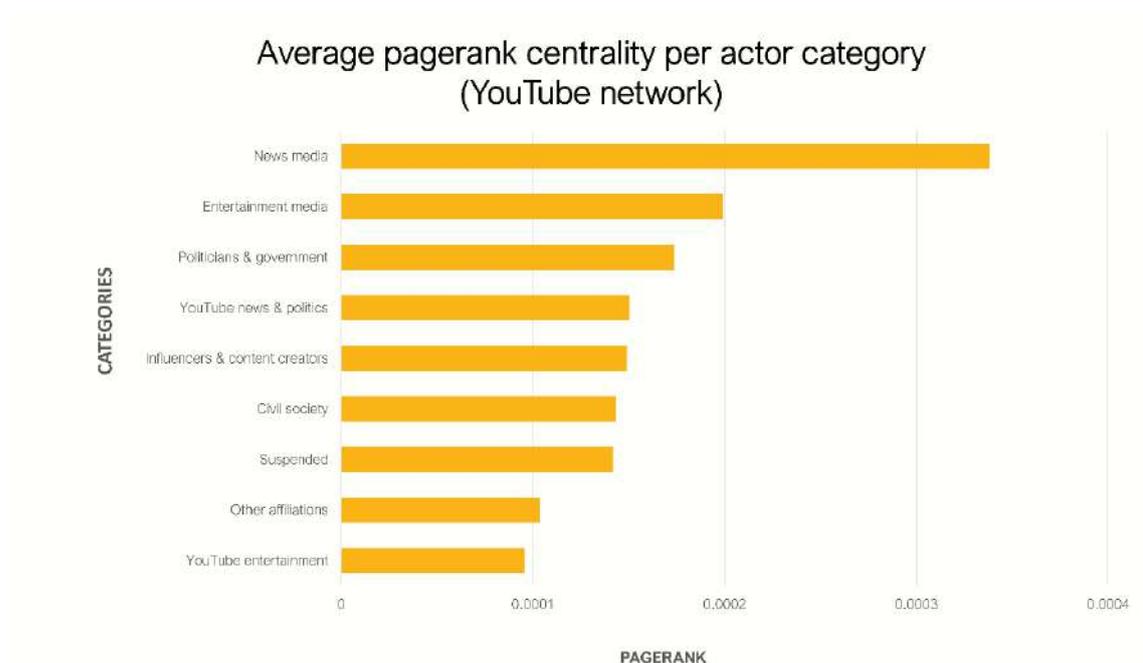


Figure 30. Average pagerank centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 37. Leading channels in top actor categories based on pagerank centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network, May 2021 to May 2022

Pagerank centrality top actors (YouTube network)		
News media	Entertainment media	Politicians & government
ABS-CBN News	Alex Gonzaga Official	RTVMalacanang
GMA News	Celestine Gonzaga-Soriano	Bongbong Marcos
Rappler	Ogie Diaz	Team Pacquiao
CNN Philippines	ABS-CBN Entertainment	Leni Robredo
UNTV News and Rescue	The Boy Abunda Talk Channel	Election Commission of India

Even though news media had constantly topped in terms of its degree, betweenness, and pagerank centrality scores, it should be pointed out that it is declining in its pagerank centrality score on a quarterly basis (Figure 31).

Subsequently, politicians and government channels gained ground in pagerank in Q1 and Q2, with RTVMalacañang and Bongbong Marcos consistently the most important among the actors in the category (Table 38).

They were overtaken by entertainment media in Q3, and later on, in Q4, they were superseded by suspended or terminated channels, which were mostly unrelated channels.

Influencers and content creators in Q2 had also joined the ranks, with the top of them identified to be supporting the candidacy of Marcos Jr.

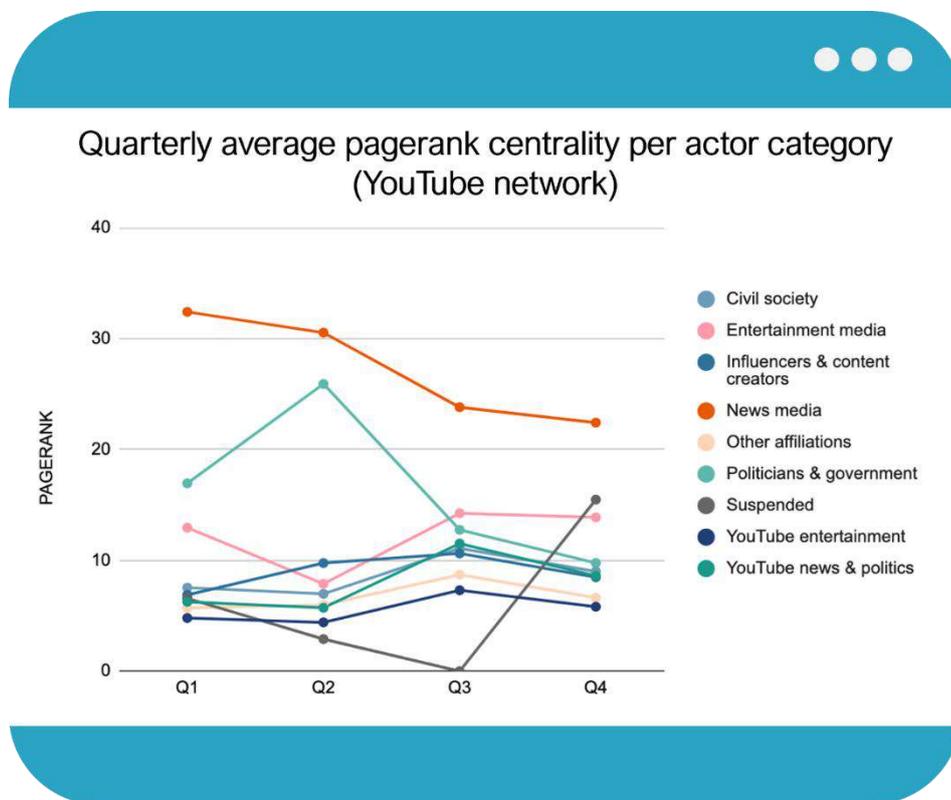


Figure 31. Quarterly average pagerank centrality per actor category in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

Table 38. *Leading channels in top actor categories per quarter based on pagerank centrality in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network*

Pagerank centrality top actors per quarter (YouTube network)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
News media	News media	News media	News media
ANC 24/7	ANC 24/7	ANC 24/7	GMA News
GMA News	ABS-CBN News	PTV	Rappler
SMNI News	UNTV News & Rescue	CNN Philippines	CNN Philippines
ABS-CBN News	Rappler	ABS-CBN News	ABS-CBN News
UNTV News & Rescue	GMA News	UNTV News and Rescue	ANC 24/7
Politicians & government	Politicians & government	Entertainment media	Suspended/ Terminated
RTVMalacanang	Bongbong Marcos	Toni Gonzaga Studio	Migs TikTok
Team Pacquiao	RTVMalacanang	The Boy Abunda Talk Channel	Guilt And Jesus
Bongbong Marcos	Team Pacquiao	Mariel Padilla	David Hay
Risa Hontiveros	Senate of the Philippines	Vice Ganda	
Ping Lacson	Leni Robredo	Aiko Melendez	
Entertainment media	Influencers & content creators	Politicians & government	Politicians & government
Celestine Gonzaga-Soriano	Vincent Tabigue	Bongbong Marcos	Bongbong Marcos
Alex Gonzaga Official	Maharlika	RTVMalacanang	Leni Robredo
Dr. Vicki Belo	Coach Jarret	Vilma Santos - Recto	RTVMalacanang
ABS-CBN Entertainment	ALJERE VLOG	Ping Lacson	Marissa Abella TV
Ogie Diaz	Jhazel de Vera	Pakistan Embassy Ethiopia	Election Commission of India

Key findings

News media continued to be the most visible source of news and political information



News media accounts were considered to be the most recommended across all centrality measures, with the top channels being mostly privately-owned, mainstream media. However, their importance as indicated by pagerank centrality as a category also declined every quarter leading to election day.

YouTube news and political channels were the second most recommended in the network

These channels were potentially latching on to mainstream media reporting and political events to leverage the visibility of news media in the search results and through recommendations.

Political and government channels served as bridges to partisan communities with their relative competitive betweenness score

Among these channels, the YouTube account, Bongbong Marcos was consistently connected in the network throughout the election year.



The entertainment media actor category was the second most 'important' channel category to election-related search keywords.

This saliency of entertainment media in terms of pagerank centrality supported the historical intermingling of politics and entertainment in the Philippines.

Youtube news and politics channels mostly consisted of Marcos Jr.-aligned channels, advancing hyperpartisan news-like content and political commentary on the YouTube platform.

There were notable channels that appeared constantly on the top list across centrality measures for all quarters (e.g. *Showbiz Fanaticz*, *Filipino Future*, *USAPANG BALITA TV*, and *PINAS INSIDER*, and *Robin Sweet Showbiz*), but there were also channels that rose in influence in every quarter.



Network communities

There were ten distinct communities of YouTube channels related to topics about the 2022 Philippine General Elections, making up 67.55% of the election year YouTube network (Table 39).

The largest community in the network primarily consisted of privately-owned mainstream news media channels in the Philippines, led by ABS-CBN News, Rappler, ANC 24/7, GMA News, and CNN Philippines (15.98%). This cluster had been leading the network from Q1 and Q2, but it had moved down to the third rank as it was superseded by Marcos-aligned channels in Q3 and further declined in size in Q4 to fifth place (Table 40).



The local news media community primarily covered election-related topics that revolved around official and prospective election events (e.g., party nominations, COC filing, official debates, and vote watch) and candidate-specific issues (e.g. Marcos Jr. disqualification case, Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte's refusal to attend debates). There was limited discussion of public interest issues such as the health crisis, economic recovery plans, and educational reform, and critical reportage on the competencies and integrity of the candidates.

The international media community emerged as the next largest community in the election year network (14.13%), but they only became salient during the last six months of the elections. Global and regional media organizations Al Jazeera English, CNA, AP Archive, ABC News Australia, and WION led the conversation about the implications of the Philippine elections in international relations with the anticipated landslide victory of Marcos Jr. News media abroad presented their analyses of the political campaign strategies of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte and related them to global political affairs in the West.

While the local and international news media communities appeared to be dominant in the network, the emergence of three Marcos Jr.-aligned communities made partisan channels on YouTube arguably more prevalent across network, which collectively comprised 22.85% of the network.

The first Marcos Jr.-aligned community ranked third in the network (12.79%), with its top channels religious-affiliated media organization SMNI News, the official YouTube channel of Marcos Jr., Bongbong Marcos, along with Marcos Jr. hyperpartisan channels.

This community primarily engaged in partisan attacks against other political candidates, opposition leaders, and progressive groups in Q1 and Q2, but changed tactics in Q3 and Q4 by emphasizing Marcos Jr.'s alleged accomplishments and competence during media interviews and political rallies versus Robredo and defending him against issues and criticisms such as his fabricated college degrees and tax evasion case.

The next Marcos Jr.-aligned community in the fourth position in the network was made up of entertainment media ABS-CBN Entertainment and a set of hyper-partisan channels (6.76%).

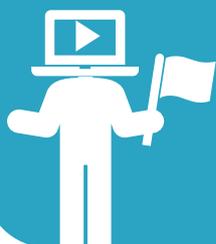
The channels in this cluster mostly featured the Marcos family and false and revisionist narratives about the Marcos regime and Marcos Jr.'s vision for the Philippines as president, as well as comparisons of Marcos Jr.'s performance in surveys, both official and informal ones.

The last community explicitly supportive of Marcos Jr. was relatively smaller (3.3%) but fortified Marcos Jr.'s appeal to the masses, featuring hyper-partisan channels that made kalye surveys or man on the street surveys across different areas in the Philippines that claimed landslide victory for Marcos Jr. and pursued incendiary and malicious attacks against Marcos Jr.'s political opponents and critics.

These Marcos-aligned communities converged and diverged in every quarter of the study, notably in between Q2 and Q3 when it overtook the news media community as the dominant cluster in the network.

Key actors emerged as central to these movements across Marcos-aligned communities, including but not limited to religious-affiliated media channels (e.g.

SMNI News and UNTV News and Rescue), state-owned media (e.g. PTV and RTVMalacañang) and entertainment media and personalities channels (e.g. Toni Gonzaga Studio and The Boy Abunda Channel).

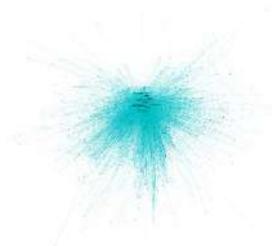
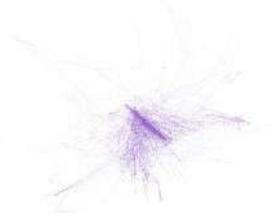
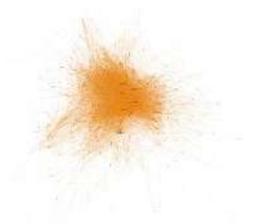


The common ground among these partisan clusters was the omnipresence of hyper-partisan content creators and influencers who buttressed the political message of the Marcos Jr. campaign as representatives of 'ordinary' users and extended it to more diverse audiences outside of those interested in politics on the YouTube network.

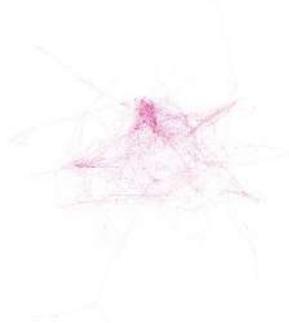
Most of these actors were also prominently affiliated with Rodrigo Duterte and his administration, they propped up his political popularity, defended his regime against issues and criticisms, and launched attacks against opposition personalities and vocal critics.

Other miscellaneous clusters also formed part of the election network such as informational channels for voter education, Philippine defense and agriculture channels, and tutorials for learning management systems, as well as various content made for entertainment purposes (Table 40).

Table 39. 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network communities and their corresponding top actors, May 2021 to May 2022

YOUTUBE	
Network visualization	Top channels
Cluster 1: Privately-owned mainstream news media (15.98%)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABS-CBN News Rappler ANC 24/7 GMA News CNN Philippines UNTV News and Rescue INQUIRER.net Manila Bulletin Online PTV RTVMalacanang
Cluster 2: International news media (14.13%)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Jazeera English CNA AP Archive ABC News (Australia) WION Sky News DW News NBC News TVUP FRANCE 24 English
Cluster 3: Religious-affiliated media, Marcos Jr. official channel, and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (12.79%)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMNI News Bongbong Marcos Showbiz Fanaticz SHOWBIZ CHIKA-DORO Maharlika Toni Gonzaga Studio PH Latest PINAS INSIDER/Eduard Q. TV Sangkay Janjan TV TeleRadyo

Cluster 4: Entertainment media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (6.76%)



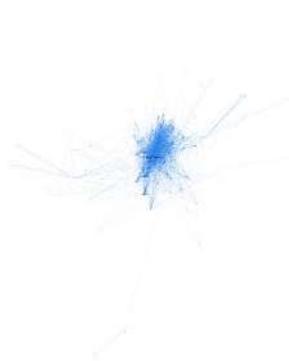
ABS-CBN Entertainment
 Marson Tv
 JUNRIEL LLANDER
 Paulalicious TV
 Project LUPAD
 TatskyBoy Kulokoy
 Filipino Vines Originals
 Dtribe Familia
 Boy Ambungan Music
 Renz Verano Official

Cluster 5: Informational channels (5.48%)



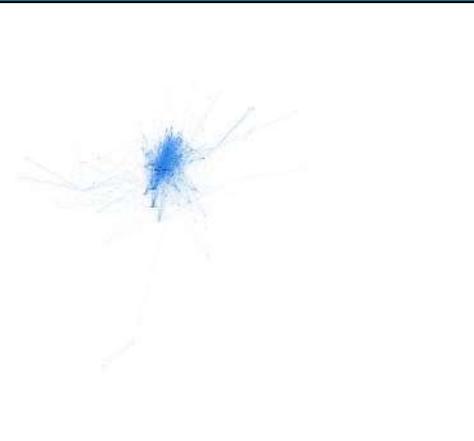
comelectv
 Smartmatic
 DepEd Baguio
 wildtv oreg
 Jeff Ski
 Jez Reel
 Michael Armentia
 LENZCHI OFFICIAL
 MiamiDadeTV
 JANICE NODA

Cluster 6: Entertainment personalities (5.37%)



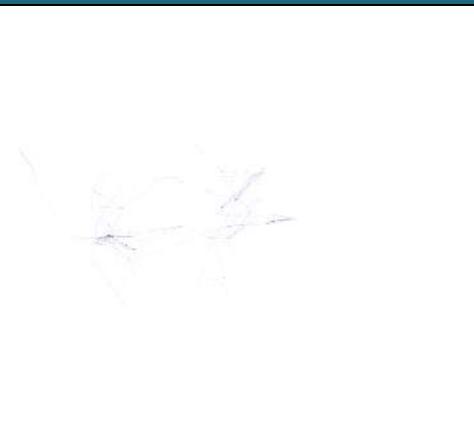
Karen Davila
 Ogie Diaz
 Alex Gonzaga Official
 Bea Alonzo
 LEBIB FAMILY
 Dr. Vicki Belo
 Leonora Leonor
 Arlene Arcebal CHANNEL
 Marjorie Barretto
 KJUANTV

Cluster 7: Marcos Jr./S. Duterte-aligned hyperpartisan channels (3.3%)



Vincent Tabigue
 PweDelie TV
 Euphoniaco TV
 ALJERE VLOG
 TROPANG BISAYA
 bugwak tv
 Jayson Eleazar TV (JETV)
 Lintoy Marcial TV
 BYAHE NI KOY TV
 SIWAWER VALLEY

Cluster 8: Channels about Philippine defense and agriculture (1.53%)



GOOD News Philippines
 aerialTV
 PH Dot Net
 Literacy Corner
 Alamin PH
 Defense Military News
 Infantahin Kami
 Simpatikong Tunay
 jessv ph
 Lloyd Gevaert

Cluster 9: Channels about learning management systems (1.11%)



iSpring
 Technology for Teachers and Students
 WATCH HAPPENING
 Teacher & Student
 Job Vacancy Result
 TalentLMS
 Anagh Technologies Inc.
 Michelle Hennings
 Docebo
 Tovuti LMS

Cluster 10: International content creators (1.1%)



Dude Perfect
 Don t Hug Me .I m Scared
 LDShadowLady
 The Telegraph
 스프스케이팝 / SBS KPOP
 doctor4t
 DIY Perks
 UnspeakableGaming
 Nidal Wonder Official
 KIER and DEV

Key findings

Privately-owned mainstream news media was the largest community in the network but was increasingly dominated by partisan communities

News media channels established their prominence in election-related discourse on YouTube in Q1 and Q2, but their position had become more precarious with the increasing consolidation of Marcos-aligned communities in Q3 and Q4.

This indicated either or both their diminishing relevance to audiences' political interests with their normative coverage of election events and/or the overwhelming number of partisan channels activated nearer the official campaign period and election day that have overtaken the traditional authority of news media as the credible source of political information.

Marcos Jr. captured YouTube as a political stronghold

The formation of three communities all supportive of Marcos Jr. that had distinct and complementary creative packaging, targeted messaging and cultivated audiences cemented his prominence on the platform. These three communities can be summarized as (1) religious-owned and state-owned media channels, (2) entertainment media and personalities, and (3) content creators and influencers, all of which were bolstered by hyper-partisan channels.



Religious-affiliated and state-owned news media were frequently grouped with Marcos-aligned communities, potentially a manifestation of their political leanings given their religious organizations' endorsement of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte, and of the state news media's normative propaganda role for the Duterte administration.



Top entertainment media personalities included Toni Gonzaga and Boy Abunda, with the former publicly supporting Marcos Jr. and the latter having conducted interviews with Marcos Jr. and his family.



The content creators' production of hyperpartisan videos further conflated the support for Marcos Jr. through *kalye surveys* and historical revisionist content and flame partisan divides through their incendiary attacks against political opponents of the Marcoses.

Network communities for other presidential candidates were scarce

Clusters supportive of Moreno, Pacquiao, Lacson, and Robredo only appeared once every quarter, with significantly smaller community size, and were often merged with other interests related to the candidates' past occupations, such as entertainment, sports, police and military, and community organizing.

Entertainment media personalities intervened with political discourse through features and interviews.

The saliency of entertainment personalities such as Boy Abunda, Toni Gonzaga, and Ogie Diaz allowed for a more inclusive and less divisive engagement with a larger network of audiences, followers, and supporters through infotainment formats.



Table 40. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network⁵

	Q1 May to July 2021		Q2 Aug to Oct 2021		Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022		Q4 Feb to May 2022	
	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics
Cluster 1	Private mainstream news media (32.05%)		Private mainstream news media (27.72%)		News media, entertainment personalities and Marcos Jr./Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (28.56%)		Informational channels (18.3%)	
	<p>ABS-CBN News GMA News ANC 24/7 Rappler CNN Philippines</p>	<p>Prospective presidential, vice presidential candidacy, party nominations, tandems, alliances, and factions.</p>	<p>ANC 24/7 ABS-CBN News Rappler GMA News CNN Philippines</p>	<p>COC filing and substitutions of standard bearers of electoral candidates. Criticisms on the use of placeholder candidates Extension of deadline for voter registration</p>	<p>PTV SMNI News The Boy Abunda Talk Channel Toni Gonzaga Studio Sangkay Janjan TV</p>	<p>Comparison between Marcos Jr. vs. Robredo, Boy Abunda interviews vs. Jessica Soho interviews, and SMNI news presidential debates vs. presidential debates hosted by other news media organizations Absolving Marcos Jr. from his tax evasion case and criticisms against him. Commending Marcos Jr. for his accomplishments and performance on his interviews and debates</p>	<p>LENZCHI OFFICIAL wildtv oreg INFORMATIO N TV EDUCATIONA L CH.1 comelectv SENYOR JHOEY- TITSER EXPLORER NG QUEZON CITY</p>	<p>Tutorials on operating VCMs Honorarium and salary increase of teachers for their service in 2022 elections Partial and unofficial results of 2022 PH Elections</p>
Cluster 2	Religious-affiliated media, state-owned media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (26.35%)		Educational institutions and informational channels (18.76%)		International news media (27.40%)		News and entertainment media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte hyper-partisan channels (17.41%)	
	<p>SMNI News RTVMalacana ng KaCoffee BANAT NEWS TV JUST in BALITA</p>	<p>Partisan attacks against presumed presidential candidates and opposition leaders. Prospective tandem of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte</p>	<p>TVUP Ateneo School of Government [ASOG] Lourdes College Participate PH FINEX Philippines</p>	<p>Voting registration information Preparations for Philippine elections amidst COVID-19</p>	<p>Bioy Ajijul TVUP Kuya PadzWhin ETv. Glenn Santander NBC News</p>	<p>Full speech of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte on their campaign rallies Candidacy of Padilla and his association with the Dutertes International news affairs</p>	<p>SMNI News The Boy Abunda Talk Channel NET 25 Sangkay Janjan TV PH Latest</p>	<p>Comparison of Marcos Jr. to other presidential candidates Survey reports with Marcos Jr. as the frontrunner in presidential polls Allegations against Robredo for committing electoral fraud to win over Marcos Jr.</p>
Cluster 3	Private mainstream media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (20.18%)		News media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (14.00%)		Private mainstream news media (25.45%)		International news (17.05%)	
	<p>News5Everywhere Walk The Talk PH Kapeng Barako Vlog ASEAN Analytics Manila Bulletin Online</p>	<p>Pulse Asia survey results with Sara Duterte as the frontrunner in VP polls Marcos Jr. supporting the Duterte administration</p>	<p>UNTV News and Rescue SMNI News Maharlika RTVMalacana ng PTV</p>	<p>Partisan attacks against presidential contenders of Marcos Jr., opposition leaders, and administration critics. Rodrigo Duterte-aligned influencers criticizing and disparaging Marcos Jr. Defense of issues against Sara Duterte on VP-run and Marcos Jr.'s tax evasion case</p>	<p>ABS-CBN News ANC 24/7 UNTV News and Rescue Rappler GMA News</p>	<p>Political analysts discussing campaign strategies and presidential debates On-ground campaign and interviews of Lacson and Sotto tandem Confirmation of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte tandem and withdrawal of Go and Rodrigo Duterte tandem for Presidency and VP</p>	<p>WION ABS-CBN Entertainment Al Jazeera English CNA DW News</p>	<p>Anticipation of the landslide victory of Marcos Jr. in PH elections Elections on the various parts of the world</p>

⁵ Top 3 only. See appendix for full table



Cross-platform analysis

Actor-level findings

Towering but limited influence of mainstream media

Across all platforms, mainstream news media as a category of actors still held influence online, as their content was shared, interacted upon, and recommended most often on social media platforms.



On Twitter, news media was second to politicians in general, but emerged as the most shared during Q4 when most election events took place.



On YouTube, news media was most recommended in all quarters on the platform, with a gap wider than other actor categories.

These results indicate that despite the multiplicity of information sources available online, news media continues to be relevant in election discourses online. However, their influence appears limited in the network, and it appears that they are only able to reach those who have affinities towards the news.

When examined based on their location in the network, news media is isolated in specific communities, and their content is only shared by the same, news-reading audiences. The widely shared content of news media can also be attributed to the volume of posts that they create about the elections, which then gain traction among audiences of the topics and personalities they cover.

Nevertheless, their influence is limited by the same, news-reading audiences who engage with their content. As shown in the cluster analysis, news media and their audiences constitute a single community of users online, which means that while they are prominent, they are isolated from the discourse.

Another threat to mainstream news media is the emergence of news actors that have become more influential or are catching up to news media in terms of influence.



On Facebook, new, religious-affiliated media have become the main source of news, overtaking longer-running media outfits.



Meanwhile, influencers and content creators, as a group, have overtaken news media's ability to bridge communities of audiences on Twitter.



Finally, on YouTube, platform-native pages have increasingly gained influence as they closely followed mainstream news media in terms of being recommended.

Thus, while mainstream news media still towers as a source of election news, they, and their news-reading, news-consuming audiences, have become more distant from the rest of the digital public, as other actors take on more diverse audiences and become preferred news sources by engaging in partisan content creation.

Emerging political intermediaries mainstreaming political agendas

The participatory nature of digital media gave rise to new actors who had the ability to set their own agendas or make certain agendas prominent.



On Facebook, actors aligned with specific political candidates were able to campaign for their bets by pushing for and coordinating in the sharing of partisan content to large volumes of audiences, harnessing the networked structure of digital media.



Influencers, bloggers, and content creators on Twitter, who had mastery of platform vernaculars became opinion leaders on issues, despite having no known political credentials or expertise. Ordinary users were also able to engage in platform-specific tactics that pushed their agenda – making specific keywords trend through mass posting, engaging in inflammatory behaviors to make conversations more salient, and using hashtags to connect with others and coordinate discussions.



Meanwhile, on YouTube, influencers and content creators co-opted the logics of news media to generate ethos about political matters, build their own communities, and become the preferred sources of information among audiences looking for partisan content. Influencers and content creators on the platform were also able to make the algorithms work to their advantage to get recommended often in other videos, latch on popular topics, and gain higher channel visibility.

The logic of connective action enables users to locate like-minded others to build online movements based on personalized action to specific interests. Users are able to perform reverse agenda-setting (Kim & Lee, 2006),

wherein individual agendas coalesce with others' online to set media agendas as they trend online. This is most apparent on Twitter, whose trending topics list becomes sources of news for mainstream news media and becomes salient in the policy agenda.

Obfuscated users sustaining and augmenting political discourses

Linked to the emergence of new intermediaries with discursive power in digital media is the presence of obfuscated users, whose identities remained undisclosed and obscured as they participated in the discourse.



On Twitter, these accounts took the form of 'stan' accounts (or accounts dedicated to supporting celebrities and their fandoms), or accounts with no display photos, no decipherable usernames or display names, and no links to personal pages.



Obscure accounts manifested on Facebook as non-political pages – *hugot* pages (or pages dedicated to posting romantic lines), special interest pages, or meme pages, whose primary content was generally not related to the elections or politics.

These groups of actors had high posting activity.



On Twitter, this meant they actively engaged in conversations with high volumes of actors.



On Facebook, this indicated that they were shared from other pages, and were linked political content to their own pages, exposing page likers to political content.

These undisclosed identities allowed them to evade public scrutiny, which could be precarious especially when these accounts engaged in abusive behaviors. Some of these obscure accounts were accounts that had been suspended and accounts that were missing or had been taken down, which meant that they participated in platform activities that were deemed unacceptable based on user policies.

These activities included coordinated inauthentic behaviors, which were deemed as an abusive practice online to attempt to mislead audiences through coordinated sharing of post links and posts by a network of pages or people (Gleicher, 2018).



On Twitter, ‘coordinated harmful activity’ happened in two ways – technical, which involved the use of automated tools to inflate and propagate narratives, and social, which referred to coordinating a group of people to meet the same ends of propagating narratives. In some instances, this included inciting followers to engage in targeted harassment.

These targeted attacks against other users are dangerous to the online discourse, as they are used to silence and delegitimize people’s opinions. Moreover, since identities of obfuscated accounts remain undisclosed despite being taken down, they can resurface and create other accounts after inflicting damage on the discourse.

Finally, obfuscated accounts masquerading as non-political pages were able to bring conversations to unsuspecting, non-political audiences, diffusing agendas and augmenting the discourse

Mediatized electoral politics bringing out celebritized politics

The Philippine entertainment industry has an intimate relationship with Philippine politics in two ways:



First, politicians have been treated in a manner similar to celebrities, with entertainment talk show guestings as one of the most recommended videos on YouTube, and entertainment channels as one of the main providers of content during the election year.



Second, celebrities have become highly vocal in their political stances, especially as election day drew closer. High-profile celebrities on Twitter have spoken up about their political views and openly endorsed candidates.

The ‘celebritization’, or the ‘societal and cultural embedding of the celebrity’ (Driessens, 2013), of Philippine politics is evident in the treatment of politicians as celebrities and the involvement of celebrities in politics. ‘Celebrity logic’ (Gamson, 1994) has been used in social domains to capture audience attention in an environment with an overload of mediated information.

Our findings further revealed that celebrity logic operated not just in terms of ‘dramatization’ or ‘emotionalization’ of actors, but also in the mobilization of fandoms that augment the power of the celebrity.



On Twitter, this was evident as ordinary users who declare themselves as fans of celebrities engage with celebrity posts.

Eroded traditional gatekeeping functions of media

Gatekeeping has been eroded in digital media, as voters are able to engage directly with electoral candidates and officials, and candidates no longer need traditional media institutions to communicate with audiences. Using their own spaces online, politicians can reach voters and engage with them directly.



On Facebook, politicians were able to make use of their pages to share official campaign content and build “affective alliances” (Bronstein, Aharony, & Bar-Ilan, 2018) with their voters through the strategic use of social media – responding to comments, creating interactive posts, etc. As the most widely shared actor group on Facebook, political actors had become the main source of political information during the election year, a function previously performed by the news media. Meanwhile, politicians were able to create posts and share them directly with their followers, which could be echoed and could trend online.



Politicians were also able to make use of Twitter affordances such as hashtags to coordinate conversations and campaign action.



On YouTube, official channel pages could share relatable, informal content such as vlogs, which could resonate highly with their audiences and serve as content on other platforms.

The erosion of traditional gatekeeping poses two issues:

On the one hand, voters are able to directly communicate with candidates to challenge their plans and even exert discursive power on issues that they otherwise have no voice in (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004). This is evident in the emergence of new political intermediaries and the more pronounced role of ordinary users in the discourse.

On the other hand, with ordinary voters' lack of ability to critically engage online, the internet may just be an additional venue for political control, an extension of the power they enact through traditional media.

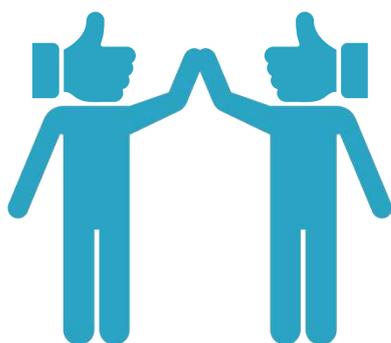
Community-level findings

Marcos Jr. dominated with 'superclusters' and 'multi-clusters'

Communities supportive of Marcos Jr. had been minor clusters, if not absent, at the beginning of the election year (i.e., 7th largest cluster on Facebook, 3rd on YouTube, and non-existent on Twitter in Q1).

As official election events rolled in Q2, Marcos Jr.-aligned communities rose to dominance across platforms through the convergence of originally distinct communities on Facebook, the congruence of separate but complementary communities on YouTube, and the establishment of a new community on Twitter.

Among these movements, the network dynamics on Facebook and YouTube, specifically, appeared to foster a 'cooperative' relationship among Marcos Jr.-aligned communities through the formation of '*superclusters*' and '*multi-clusters*.'



The Marcos-Duterte 'supercluster' on Facebook is argued to emerge from the long-standing political alliance between Marcos Jr. and President Duterte, on one hand, and the electoral tandem of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte, on the other.

Facebook was known to be a Duterte stronghold during the 2016 Philippine General Elections and throughout his administration; and this was assumed to have been capitalized by the Marcos Jr. camp given his relatively weak footing on the platform. It should be noted though that the actors within the supercluster remain singular in their affinities such that the pages and groups support only Marcos Jr. or only the Dutertes, except in Q4 when accounts dedicated to campaign for the BBM-Sara tandem were also present.

Where they converge early on was in their political messaging, with their shared agenda to build community support for Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte, launch attacks against Robredo and other political opponents, and advance anti-media and anti-progressive discourse. This gave Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte unprecedented prominence in a platform where popularity was the currency, with the supercluster representing almost 30% of the election network on Facebook in Q4.

Marcos Jr. was both dominant and far-reaching on YouTube with a ‘multi-cluster’ of three major communities overtly aligned with his campaign. These communities reached different audiences with bespoke but parallel political interlocution strategies.

The primary community of Marcos Jr.-aligned actors with the news media and YouTube political channels engaged in explicit politicking with a three-pronged approach of (re)building Marcos Jr.’s reputation by highlighting his supposed achievements, defending him against criticism, and incessantly berating his political opponents.



The community led by entertainment personalities and a different set of YouTube political channels took on a more implicit approach of humanizing Marcos Jr. and mythologizing his family through historical disinformation about his father’s regime through soft features and interviews.

A less prominent but important community was the YouTube hyper-partisan channels featuring influencers that engaged with politics ‘on the ground’ by featuring ordinary people across Philippine cities and provinces to portray Marcos Jr. as a popular choice among the masses.

In a platform like YouTube, this community-based messaging was more potent with its platform culture that centered on personal relevance to publics with particular political sensibilities, than on sweeping popularity.

News media preference evident among partisan communities

News media actors were constantly present alongside political actors in key partisan communities of Marcos Jr., Robredo, and other presidential candidates across platforms. While there was a confluence of factors that might have resulted in these network associations between political and media actors, it should be emphasized that the platform affordances configure what this association might mean.



For Facebook and Twitter, the appearance of news media in a partisan community indicated that actors within that cluster both had political accounts aligned to a candidate and particular media organizations as *sources of the content* they consumed and shared.



On YouTube, where news was increasingly politicized by influencers (Soriano & Gaw, 2022), this same co-presence signalled that these political and news channels had *similarities in the topics they covered or the audiences that watched their content*. In both cases, it was the actors within the partisan communities that expressed preference and/or signalled affinity for particular news sources.

Marcos Jr.-aligned communities across the platforms constantly had the religious-affiliated SMNI News as a key actor in the cluster, together with privately-owned Manila Bulletin on Facebook, government media PTV on Twitter, and religious-affiliated UNTV and government media RTV and PTV on YouTube.

The Robredo-aligned community on Facebook had multiple co-appearance with Rappler, ABS-CBN, and Philippine Star, while Leni Robredo's official account was part of the privately-owned mainstream media community on Twitter.

Other candidates' accounts and pages were associated with media outlets like GMA, Tribune, and Abante News but they only appeared once and were often subsumed in a community that did not have overt partisan character.

These patterns of association imply that the accounts, channels, and publics that engage in partisan discourse are inclined to share or engage with the content from specific news media organizations, but the reasons for this preference are beyond the scope of the research.

However, the research can infer that some news media outlets in the network are predisposed to be part of partisan communities given their proprietors' public disclosure of political alliances during the campaign season. SMNI News' proprietor Kingdom of Jesus Christ leader Apollo Quiboloy had publicly endorsed the Marcos Jr.-Sara Duterte tandem and could be assumed to have their interests aligned in the operation of the media organization

Media-led communities' narrow influence over publics

Mainstream media composed of mostly privately-owned media organizations were still one of the largest communities in the network across the platform (i.e., top community on Twitter and YouTube and second on Facebook). However, their level of influence declined or they lost their distinction over the network across the platforms over time.



On YouTube, the media-led community fell to the 3rd and 5th rank starting Q3 and Q4 of the study.



Media's standing on Facebook was unstable in the first two quarters of the election year and the media actors in the media communities were then subsumed under the partisan communities of Marcos Jr. and Robredo in Q3 and Q4.



On Twitter, the news media communities were initially dispersed with each major media organization having its own community in Q1 but they consolidated to become a dominant community in Q2. However, the same pattern of divergence happened again in Q3 and Q4, some of which merged with the partisan communities of Robredo and Marcos Jr.

While news media communities are still prominent actors in the network, they have become less authoritative as the primary sources of political information and knowledge and are often superseded by partisan sources in directly engaging audiences. Moreover, this precarious stature of news media is further exacerbated by its distance from the rest of the communities in the network.



On Facebook and YouTube, at least half of the networks had no news media actors present in their communities. The absence of news media in these communities might indicated two things:

First, the members of the communities had minimized their dependence on formal news media organizations as sources of information

Or second, their exposure to mainstream media content had been limited as a result of platform algorithmic processes

Inferring from the topic modeling, evidence points to the homogeneity in news media's reporting of election events and electoral candidates as a potential explanation of their position in the network. Most of the

topics featured in the media communities are major election milestones (e.g., COC filing, proclamation rallies) and personalities (e.g., candidates, parties) and are not primarily the election agenda, issues, and concerns of various sectors and the public.

This lack of diversity in reportage falls short in serving an equally diverse audience. It should be noted that the omnipresence of hyper-partisan sources of information on Facebook and YouTube may also factor in this clustering pattern, either diverting people's attention to news media or capturing their interest with more politically resonant messaging.

Non-political communities in political affairs

Political engagement was not exclusive among political communities as non-political clusters were also prominent in the network.



On YouTube, entertainment media communities spotlighted politicians through features and interviews that displayed their personal side (e.g., early life, family, personality), with some also tackling their stance and plans on political issues.

Anna Cristina Petierra (2021) argues that there has always been a relationship between entertainment and politics, where celebrities use their media capital to move into politics and politicians have always tapped into entertainment personalities to buttress their mass appeal.



Facebook non-political communities also exemplified entertainment value but were often in the form of vernacular genres on social media, such as gaming, vlogging, and meme accounts, among others.

The involvement of seemingly non-political influencers and closed groups in disinformation campaigns has been documented in the 2019 Midterm Elections (Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2019) and our special reports on political manipulation investigate this phenomenon in more depth.

The mobilization of non-political accounts and in non-political spaces for the elections is argued to be a way to reach audiences that are less politically engaged or uninterested in the mainstream political discourse. Engaging these audiences in forms that are familiar to them may be a means to minimize feelings of aversion or ambivalence to political talk.

The common ground between the two cases of non-political accounts producing political content or being part of political discourse on YouTube and Facebook is the platform incentives of visibility and remuneration under their content creator programs, as well as the potential profits from covertly servicing political campaigns.

While the research data does not directly create a link between the political activities of non-political actors and their capacity to profit from it, earlier research would suggest that such non-political-turned-political engagements are driven by, or at least rewarded with, economic incentives (Ong & Cabbuag, 2022; Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2019; Soriano & Gaw, 2022).

Civil society and progressives scarce in major communities

Civil society, sectoral groups, and activist organizations were generally absent in the major communities on Facebook and YouTube in the network during the election year. On Twitter, there was consistently one community

composed of the labor group presidential and vice-presidential candidates Leody De Guzman and Walden Bello and allied socially progressive groups.

Otherwise, these non-governmental actors acting in behalf of specific sectors or promoting and defending public interests might be too little in numbers or quite dispersed in the network to congregate in a community. Nonetheless, their lack of prominence in election discourses is a concern as it leaves the election agenda dominated by traditional political actors and further marginalizes minority groups and sectors from participating in democratic processes.





C H A P T E R

Political legitimation in the 2022 Philippine General Elections⁶

⁶This section is a preliminary presentation of political legitimation as a discursive practice among digital publics. A more theoretical write-up will be produced by the PMM Team in subsequent peer-reviewed papers.

Political legitimation and the public

Democratic societies have, in principle, constitutional and institutional mechanisms that would facilitate the endowment and safeguarding of the political legitimacy of authorities, which would then enable these authorities to dutifully govern and exercise their mandate (Beetham, 1991; Weatherford, 1992). Political legitimacy in a liberal democracy is essentially established when a constitutionally prescribed majority of its citizens have given their consent for particular members of the political elite to rule (von Haldenwang, 2017).

Political legitimacy in a liberal democracy is sustained when a critical mass of the public offers their political support to these elites. Supporters of political elites may likewise engage in strategies that would help establish and/or maintain the political elites' political legitimacy. It is the mechanism by which we allow people to represent us and delegate to them certain decision-making processes and exercises. It is how we enable others to lead us.

In the context of online discourses, political legitimation is how we give space to various individuals through our interactions on social media or with various contents therein. In the process of commenting, retweeting, and sharing online content, people help legitimate or delegitimize certain actors.

Meanwhile, political authorities in democratic societies would utilize strategies that would enable them to rightfully establish and maintain their political legitimacy (Mazepus, 2017; Weatherford, 1992). From the supply side of the political spectrum, political elites would engage in political legitimation strategies that would help them validate their claim to authority (von Haldenwang, 2017).

Our study, however, focused on the demand-side of political legitimation; specifically, on how supporters of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2022 Philippine General Elections engaged in strategies that endeavored to

legitimize their candidates' positioning as potent presidential and vice-presidential contenders.

The findings discussed in this section are our initial argumentation for the manifestation of political legitimization strategies in mediated political discourse on the three platforms. These manifestations across platforms affirm our definition of discourse as an organizing schema that “structure[s] the way a thing is thought and the way we act on the basis of that thinking” (Rose, 2001, p. 136).

Political legitimization as revealed in the platforms' texts, interactions, and cultures proved to be encompassing modes of naming and allowing power (Castells, 2007), and therefore, legitimizing reverberations of particular voices. On the other hand, these legitimations equally deflected other points of view. These descriptive findings are our contribution to a renewed interest in legitimization as sifters of digital discursive practices.

While it may be redundant to argue for legitimization as discourse, we place these findings in the context of cross-platform commonality, as well as the presence of “all types”, regardless if some do appear to counteract the others. As some scholars argue for a counter-intuitive rendering of legitimization as a necessary counter-discourse, as in communicative aggression (Bodrunova et al., 2021), personality cults in ritualized flattery (Danzinger, 2021), or the rather pragmatic take of legitimization as repair (Florio & Sproviero, 2021), these findings are an inventory of what has transpired during the 2022 Philippine General Elections.

As a conversation starter, this section opens up empirical understanding of how Philippine digital publics collectively create frameworks of common good, public service, economic benefits, and responsible citizenship. To reiterate the descriptive nature of these findings, there is a push and pull to some of them, as one finding may offset the one preceding it.

Although we make pressing recommendations as the country transitions with its new set of national and regional public servants, we are not yet accounting for the “correct political legitimation”; we are solely laying out empirical advances of how discourse in political legitimation sustains and reproduces consent to being governed. Moreover, this inventory as preliminary argumentation for discourse as “language in use in any form” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258) interweaves languages in all layers of *text* – textual, visual, auditory, and interactional.

KEY FINDINGS

1

We observed that political legitimation strategies in online election discourses gravitated toward attempts to either legitimize or delegitimize the potency of political actors in the presidential and vice-presidential race. Strategies that sought to legitimize political actors include *gendering*, *archetyping*, *authorization*, *mythification*, *flattery*, and *advertising competence and merits*, while strategies that strove to delegitimize political actors cover *evidencing incompetence*, *factualizing opinion*, *attacking others*, *doubt-seeding*, *amplifying information or disinformation*, and *absent others*.

2

Even the predominant issues that emerged during our period of observation revolved around legitimizing and delegitimizing political actors through discourses that spoke of their response to predominant issues, or perceived lack thereof, and discourses that accounted for their positionality on predominant issues.

3

We also observed that platform-specific affordances were strategically utilized to legitimize or delegitimize political actors. These affordances included the use of hashtags on Twitter, the use of icons for reactions, sound effects, comments, and polls on Facebook, and the use of video titles and thumbnails as clickbaits on YouTube.

Political legitimization of actors

We noted that the most present political actor on Twitter was former Vice President Leni Robredo, as Twitter appeared to be predominantly occupied by her political supporters.

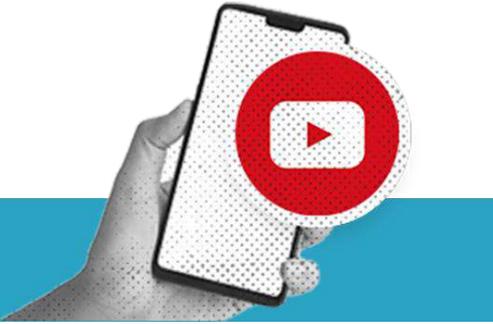


Gendering as a legitimization strategy:

The action-oriented masculine and the process-focused feminine

In studying our online corpus, we found the use of gendering in legitimating political actors. The act of “gendering” is a long-standing subversive label against the naturalness of embodied gendered expression (Frank, 1991; Butler 1990). In representation studies, the gendering of ideology is rendered as an intentional social performance or act (Foucault, 1978).

Specifically, we are able to surface a gender continuum between the supposed action-oriented masculine and the process-focused feminine. When the masculine is invoked, it is directional and intentional; there is a sense of ownership of the masculine. In comparison, while the same is observed with feminine frames, there are also peripheral and subtle instances in which femininity is less direct or intentional.



On YouTube, gendered expectations made up portions of the election campaign rhetoric delivered by Robredo and former Manila Mayor Isko Moreno. This rhetoric was instigated when probed about the style of leadership that they hoped to emulate for the country. In a video where she announced her candidacy, Robredo's speech stressed how women, particularly mothers, sacrificed so much of themselves for the sake of their children:



“Nanay ako hindi lang ng tatlong anak ko, kundi ng buong bansa. At alam ng lahat ng ibang nanay, ng lahat ng ibang magulang, kung ano ang kaya nilang pagdanan at isakripisyo sa ngalan ng kanilang mga anak. Naaalala ko nga 'yung maraming kaso ng domestic abuse na hinawakan ko noong nag-aabogado pa ako. Kung paanong tiniis ng mga kliyente ko ang pang-aabuso at pananakit ng asawa nila. Kapag tinanong mo kung bakit, iisa ang sagot: Alang-alang sa mga anak nila.”

Here, Robredo unapologetically used the ticket of the feminine counterforce. Her metaphors were strongly identified as the alternative and the opposition to the masculine majority. Notably, she also included the feminine mindset and approach alongside the literal feminine persona she carried.

Moreno similarly alluded to these gendered expectations in an interview series conducted with several presidential candidates. Asked about potential members of his cabinet, Moreno said that he was looking for people who were “battle-tested” and saw this trait imbibed by men experienced in bureaucracy:



“You need these kinds of people that are battle-tested because in times of war and battle, that separates men from the boys. So, you need good men to help you confront your problems. There's so many problems.”



On Facebook, there were four actors who stood out. First among them was former President Rodrigo Duterte who remained the foremost political actor in the country based on the social media discourse on Facebook. He was the masculine man, whereas his daughter, former Davao City Mayor and now Vice President Sara Duterte was the masculine woman. However, the masculine man still trumped the masculine woman.

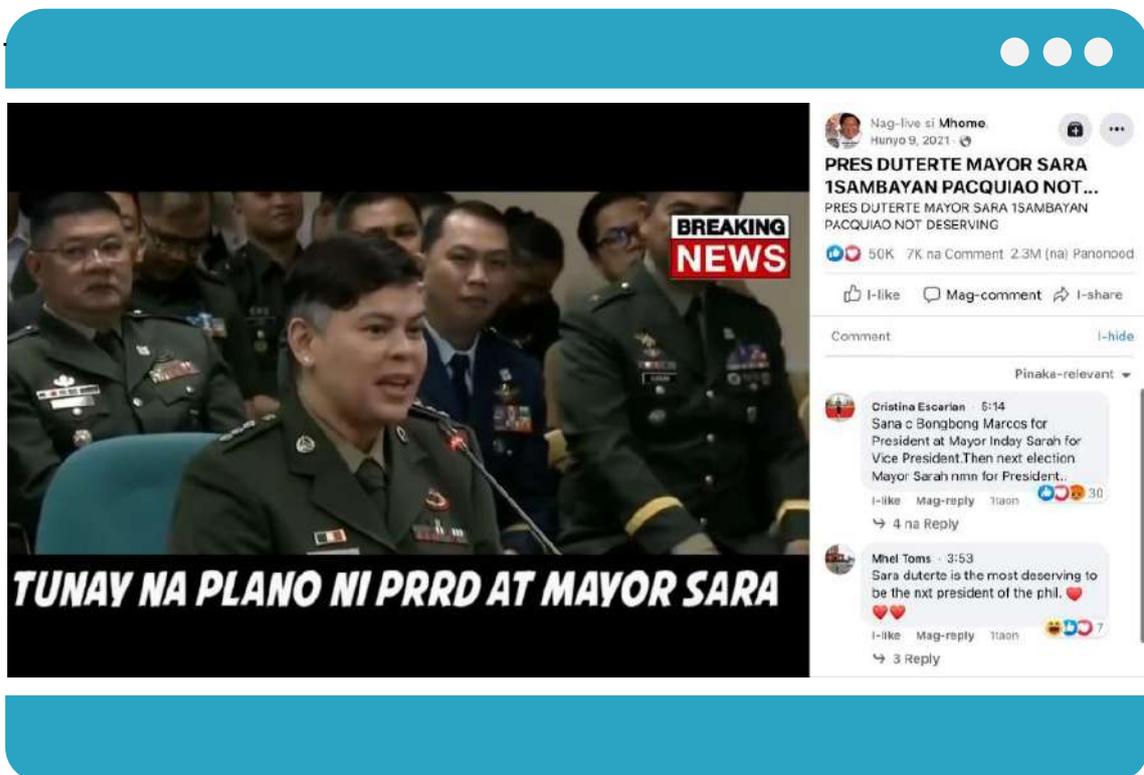


Image 1.

Screenshot of Mhome's Facebook live featuring Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte in military regalia

On the other hand, Robredo was the feminine woman, who, as the archetype went, was process-oriented both in her actions and speaking. She was also framed as someone who was nurturing. The fourth gendered character was former Senator Manny Pacquiao, who was presented as masculine by default due to his profession as a boxer. His masculinity, however, was juxtaposed with his statements about the LGBTQ+ community. Either way, Pacquiao posed an interesting case study in the discussion of the gender spectrum on Facebook.



Image 2.
News5 features quotes from VP Leni Robredo's appearance in Between Us Queens podcast



On Twitter, an explicit gender reference in tweets was widely used after Robredo uttered the statement, “The best man for the job is a woman” in her closing spiel during one of the publicized debate sessions. This statement was widely tweeted and retweeted:



Image 3.
Aika Robredo (@aikarobredo)
shares graphic on VP Leni
Robredo’s closing spiel

Gender references also became prominent in tweets when Moreno and other presidential candidates staged a press conference at The Manila Peninsula to disparage Robredo's presidential run.



Image 4.
Reporter Natasha Gutierrez (@natashya_g) alludes to the gender implications of Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno's press conference at The Manila Peninsula



Image 5.
Twitter user lj (@htpjww_) calls out Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno and company for their press conference at The Manila Peninsula



Archotyping as a legitimation strategy:

Organic branding meets prescribed branding

This frame was noticeably seen in the territory of Facebook, which facilitated the intersection of the organic branding and the prescribed branding of various candidates. Archotyping is the process by which frames cumulatively embody a specific social media persona. On Facebook, we surfaced six archetypes in the last elections: **“the never enough”**, **“the bigger person”**, **“the superhero”**, **“the caregiver”**, **“the challenger”**, and **“the innocent”**.



The **“never enough”** archetype is embodied by candidates who show their persistence and perseverance. Former President Duterte supposedly embodied this through his constant pursuit of his war against illegal drugs.



Meanwhile, the **“bigger person”** refers to candidates whose significant accomplishments remain largely underappreciated. Accordingly, they apologize for their lack of oversight or misgivings, making them the bigger person, so to speak, in the process. Former President Duterte was likewise considered a good personification of this persona, as he had repeatedly said sorry for the seeming failures of his administration even if he had supposedly done his best during his incumbency.



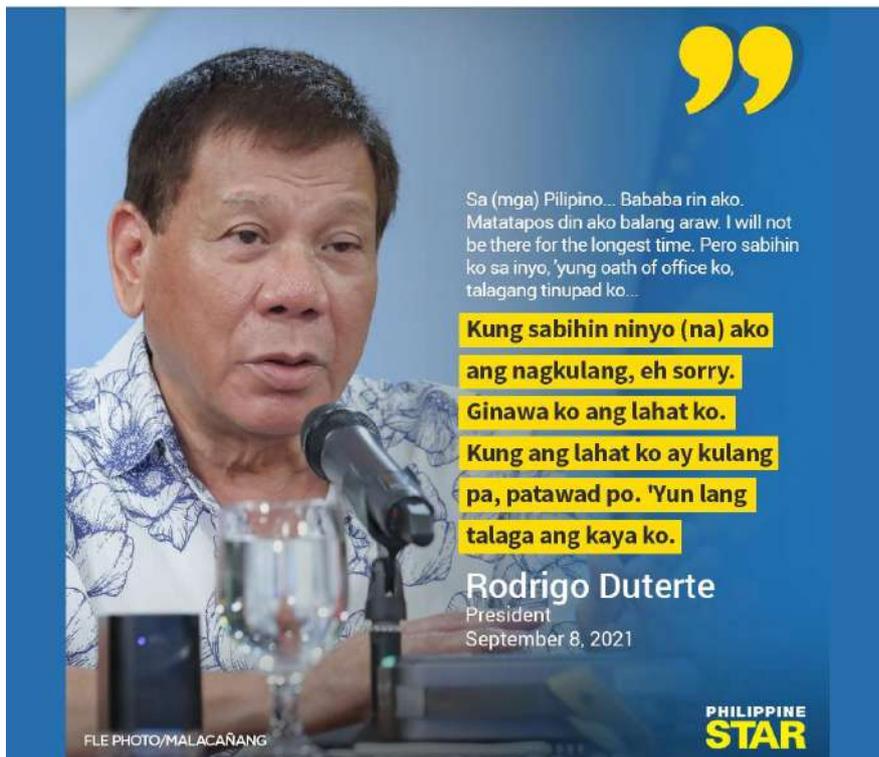
Philippine Star ✓
Setyembre 8, 2021 · 🌐



'KUNG ANG LAHAT KO AY KULANG PA, PATAWAD'

Amid the alleged deficiencies in the government's pandemic response, President Duterte on Wednesday said he is sorry if the public thinks that his administration's efforts are still lacking.

"Kung sabihin ninyo (na) ako ang nagkulang, eh sorry. Ginawa ko ang lahat ko. Kung ang lahat ko ay kulang pa, patawad po. 'Yun lang talaga ang kaya ko," he said.



👍👎🗨️ 55K

8.2K Comment 11K Pag-share



Image 6.

A quote card from The Philippine Star highlights President Rodrigo Duterte's apology for the deficiencies of the government's pandemic response



“**Superheroes**,” for their part, constantly highlight their attempts as public servants to solve various problems.

Meanwhile, the “**challenger**” goes beyond the superhero archetype as it stakes a claim towards supremacy. Moreno, for example, would talk about his accomplishments in Manila city. It is not enough for one to be able to solve problems, one must appear as the best problem solver.

While the “**superhero**” is all about action, “**caregivers**” focus on showing their nurturing side. Robredo’s actions during the pandemic were usually framed as a “superhero-caregiver” as references about her often revolved around her numerous initiatives, and how these demonstrated her care for the country.

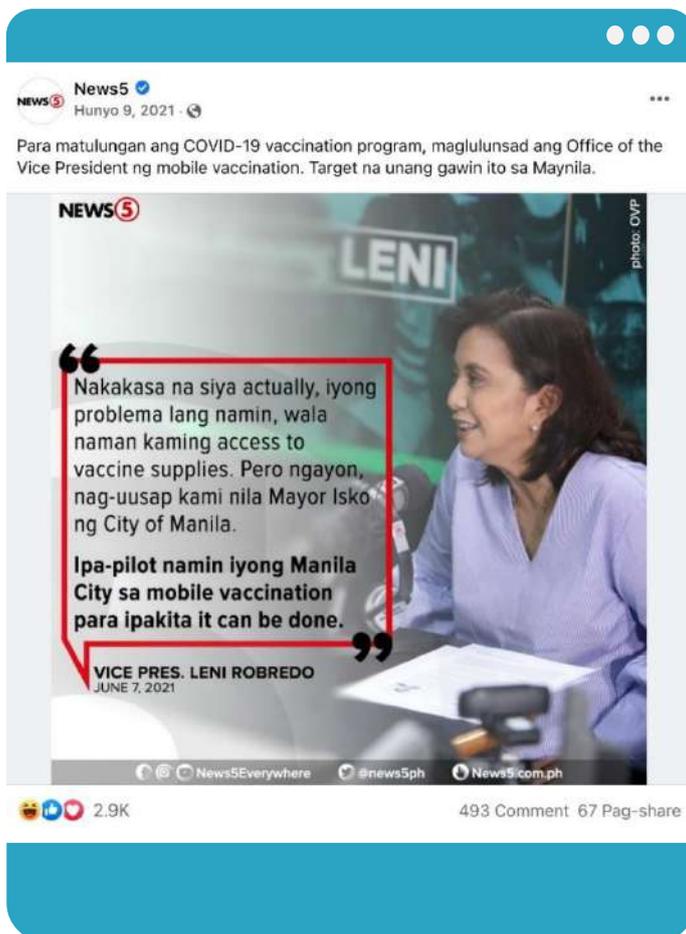


Image 7.
News5 shares a quote from VP Leni Robredo about her office’s mobile vaccination efforts



Image 8.
News5 announces Mayor Isko Moreno and VP Leni Robredo's joint efforts in conducting a drive-thru vaccination for Manila city vendors



Finally, there is the “innocent” who prefers not to participate in the hot issues of the day. Moreno, for example, positioned himself as neither pink nor red in his news appearance below; his pitch was that he should be chosen because he was not part of the enmity between the Robredo and the Marcos camps.



Image 9.

News5 features quotes from both VP Leni Robredo and Mayor Isko Moreno about their stance on the Marcos family

Moreno’s embodiment of the “**innocent**” archetype is particularly nuanced on YouTube as he is positioned as “The Innocent” – a neutral third choice between two diametrically opposed parties. In several of his campaign videos (i.e., at the campaign circuit or at a media interview), Moreno located himself between the Marcoses and the Aquinos.

He criticized Robredo’s desire to prevent a Marcos presidency, stating that Filipinos should not be caught in the middle of a battle between the “reds” and the “yellows” or “pinks”. His rhetoric asserted that the long-running feud between the two families – and their respective allies – only worsened the societal issues the country was currently facing.

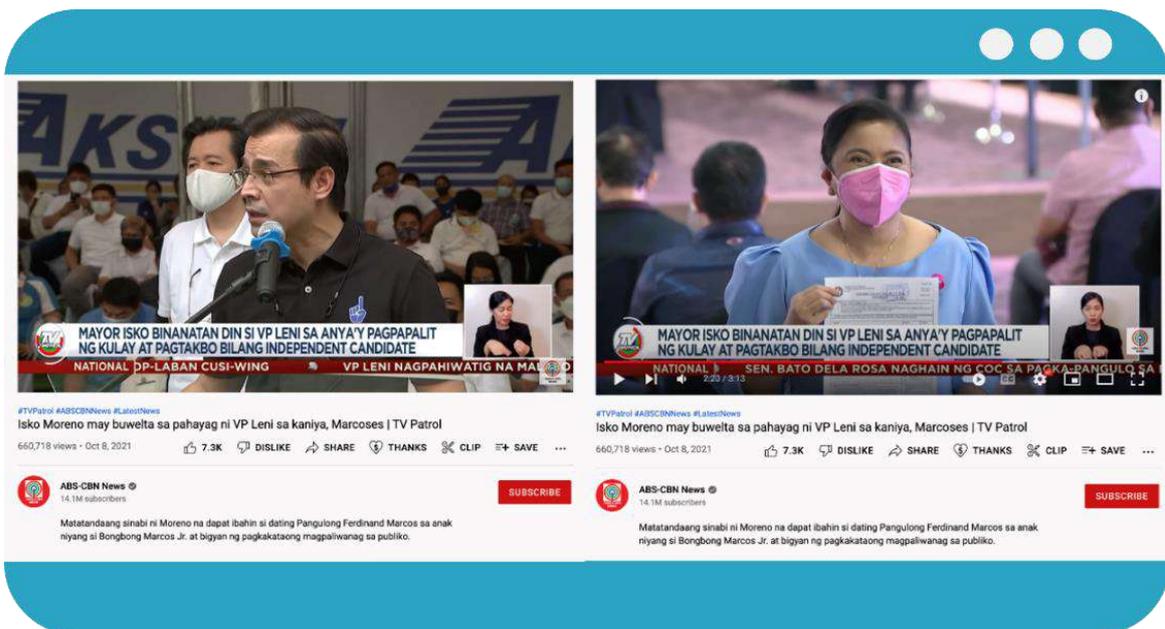


Image 10.

A TV patrol news report further highlights Mayor Isko Moreno’s contention on VP Leni Robredo’s choice of running as an independent candidate

YouTube was for Moreno as Twitter was for Robredo. We noted many accounts and stories which highlighted Robredo's track record during the pandemic. In this regard, she was the pandemic superhero among her supporters on Twitter. She was also a compassionate caregiver which aligned with her feminine framing.



Image 11.
Mara Cepeda (@maracepeda) covers the Office of the Vice President's vaccine express initiative in Malolos, Bulacan

Aside from the vice president, it was Pacquiao who came across as a hero because of his status as a boxing icon, a practical living legend in his field. International coverage of the elections, as circulated on Twitter, always mentioned Pacquiao as a boxing hero.



Image 12.

Joshua Gonzalez (@JimmyCubos) highlights Sen. Manny Pacquiao's reputation as a boxing hero



Authorization as a legitimation strategy:

Linking actors with other personalities and titles

As a discursive strategy, an authority may validate the credibility of another actor or an action (Van Leeuwen 2007 in Recuero, Soares, & Vinhas, 2021). In the context of political legitimation, authorization manifests when posts link a candidate with other personalities or with professional titles, which is an attempt to ride on the heuristics of the stronger personality or on the inherent branding of professional titles.

On Twitter, for instance, presidential candidates appeared independently in tweets but vice-presidential candidates were always associated with their presidential tandem. For example, Robredo's name appeared independently in tweets, while Senator Kiko Pangilinan's name almost always appeared with Robredo's.

Similarly, Senator Ping Lacson's name appeared independently in tweets, while tweets about Senator Tito Sotto III almost always included a reference to Lacson. With respect to former Senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. and former Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, although they both appeared independently in some tweets, Sara Duterte was mentioned more often than Marcos Jr.

It is interesting to note that this political legitimation strategy was present in the tweets of established news agencies. Tweets by news agencies were also often retweeted by the online public.

Moreover, authorization strategies also involved maximizing the heuristic value of celebrities and media personalities. As the elections drew near, tweets about celebrities and media personalities endorsing candidates became more and more prominent.

Image 13.
Reporter Mara Cepeda (@maracepeda) shares Catriona Gray's endorsement of VP Leni Robredo and Sen. Kiko Pangilinan in the 2022 Philippine General Elections



Image 14.
A netizen (@eydipi28) shares Dingdong Dantes's endorsement of VP Leni Robredo in the 2022 Philippine General Elections

With respect to the use of professional titles, we observed that most tweets about Robredo often referred to her as “VP Leni”, while the other candidates were simply referred to as “Bato”, “Ping”, and “Manny” even though these candidates were public officials as well. However, since tweets were structurally limited in terms of number of characters, absence of professional titles in tweets might have been due to parsimony in character count.

Image 15.

CNN Philippines (@cnnphilippines) breaks down the experience and achievements of vice-presidential aspirant Sen. Kiko Pangilinan



Image 16.

ABS-CBN News (@ABSCBNNews) shares Sen. Bato dela Rosa’s stance on VP Leni Robredo’s pandemic efforts



On YouTube, thumbnails would notoriously include images of some personalities but these personalities would not even appear or were not even discussed in the videos. Thus, personality images were misused as clickbaits on YouTube.

Meanwhile, several YouTube videos made use of personalities other than political candidates to highlight the latter’s authority. Key personalities interviewed or mentioned by video channels included those who occupied government positions or represented key institutions. These personalities included Raffy Tulfo (who represents justice or law enforcement), Chiz Escudero (local government), Richard Gomez (local government), and even Ana Tabunda (public polling). While they did not make up the bulk of the video, they were able to act as springboards for discussion. As a result, their faces were also included in the thumbnails:



Image 17.

A YouTube video thumbnail (JUST IN : SAWAKAS! PACQUIAO LISTAHAN ng CORRUPT NILABAS NA! PRES DUTERTE NAGULANTANG TULFO) highlights the relevant personalities in a government corruption case

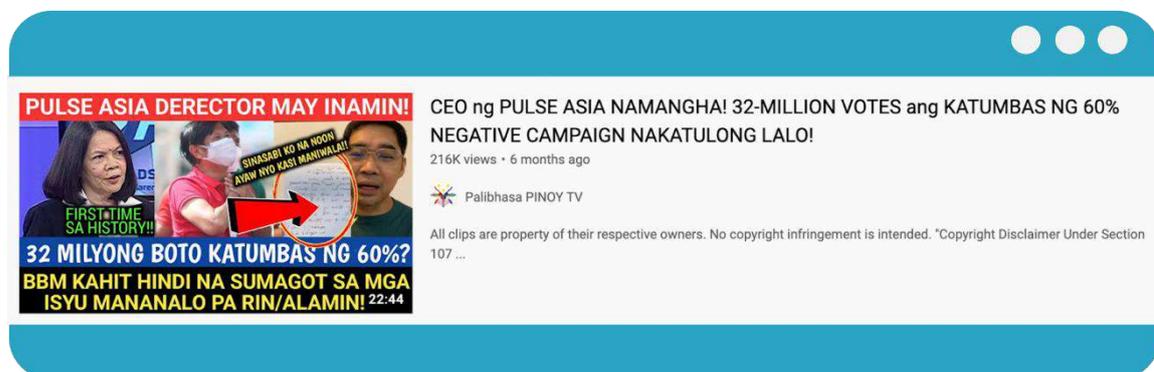


Image 18.

A YouTube video (CEO ng PULSE ASIA NAMANGHA! 32-MILLION VOTES ang KATUMBAS NG 60% NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN NAKATULONG LALO!) adds Pulse Asia Director Ana Tabunda in its thumbnail

Furthermore, both the presidency and the vice-presidency were seen as ways to translate localized efforts to the national level. In one video, Lacson referred to his past authority as the chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) upon being asked about the interventions he planned to impose to curb structural corruption. He then scaled these interventions to the three branches of government:



“Nagawa ko na 'to nung chief PNP ako. Tinanong ako kung ano ang pangunahing problema ng PNP, eh agad ang sagot ko, 'yung PNP. At ang sagot, PNP rin. [...] Nireporma ko 'yung PNP, nawala 'yung kotong culture, at mula baba hanggang taas, nawala 'yung corruption.”

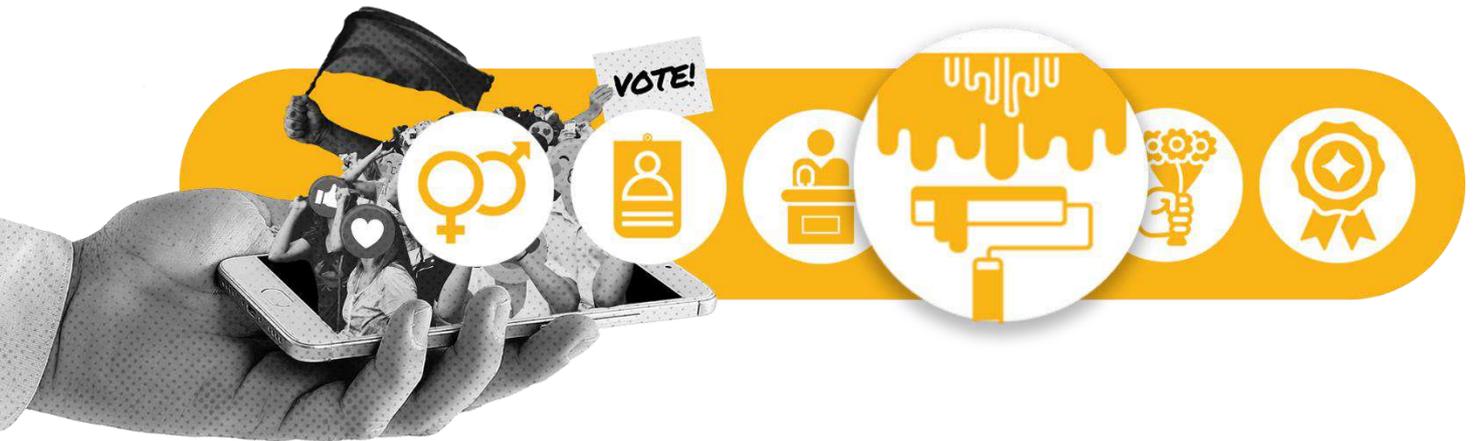
Experience with local government was seen as a great indicator by which one can measure a president’s effectiveness. This was echoed by one video in which Richard Gomez, a standing Mayor himself, endorsed Marcos Jr.’s run:



“We like him to become president. I know for a fact that he will do well as president, because of number one, his experience with the local government, in all of the candidates now for president, he is the most qualified especially running the country.”

This strategy is an endorsement through a supposedly valid testimony and affirmation made by media and political personalities. This is backed by another strategy, *resibo* which is illustrated in this section.

Authorization as a legitimation strategy did not come across strongly on Facebook. Instead, it manifested only in terms of the use of official titles: “Mayor Sara”, “Senator Manny”, and “VP Leni”. We did not see much linking of personalities to each other on Facebook, presumably because Facebook focused more on highlighting the unique or standalone characteristics of a person, and less on juxtaposing them against others. On Facebook, talk revolved around a person, for better or for worse, rather than in relation to other people.



Mythification as a legitimization strategy:

The quintessential grand as overarching narrative

This is an interesting, though not altogether surprising, finding. It refers to “the quintessential grand” as an overarching narrative. We take Bouchard’s (2018) use of “mythification” in mainstream thought as a vessel of sacred values that transcend this world and the world of the magnificent imagination.

Mythification was most pronounced on YouTube, and it was mostly observed in videos that make mention of the Marcos family. Calling back to Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s administration seemed to serve two distinct purposes. On the one hand, his administration was glorified due to the supposed improvements enacted during his term, from government infrastructure projects to massive military strength. While there already seemed to be an acknowledgment of the regime’s injustices, video channels were able to redirect the conversation back to the administration’s achievements, as in the case of one commentator:

“May masama, may pang-aabuso, at may pagnanakawan katulad ng ibang presidency o administrasyon. Pero nagresearch ang marami. Marami, as in marami, meron ngang ibang nagulat, eh. Ganun pala. Ni hindi nga alam ng mga tao nun na ang Heart Center, ang Lung Center, ang Kidney Center, eh pinatayo nung Ferdinand Marcos. Ilang administrasyon ba ang walang kasalanan? Lahat naman may pagkakamali ah.”

Another video commentator unpacked the irony of this information ecosystem as follows:

“It has been truly amazing to see the Philippines election unfold because, in this election, they're not just voting on their future. They're voting on their past. Specifically, which one do they want to believe? The one where Ferdinand Marcos wreaked havoc on a country and its people under Martial Law, or the one where he was somehow the greatest NBA scout of all time?”

On Twitter, this theme transpired through the romanticization of the Marcos era, as exemplified by the #BRINGBACKMARCOS hashtag which called for the return of supposedly better times. Otherwise, this frame was not often used on Twitter.

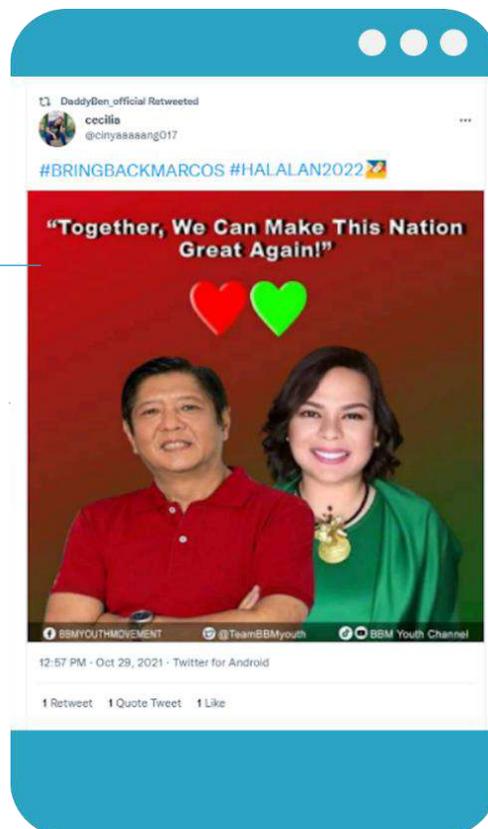
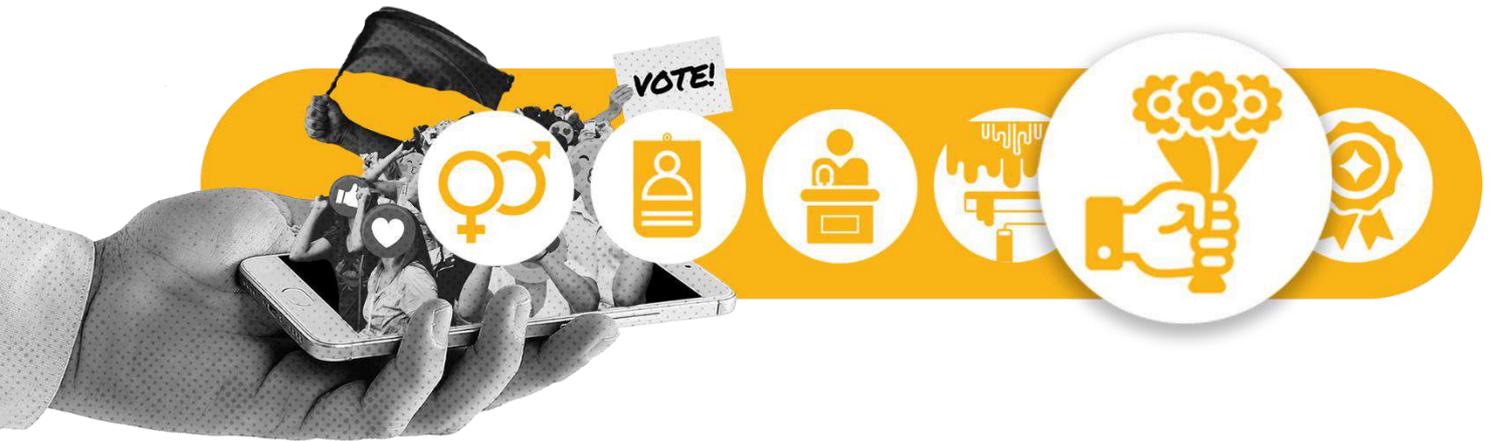


Image 19.
Caption from a Twitter user (@cinyaaaaang017) shows their support of the Marcos-Duterte tandem through the #BringBackMarcos hashtag

On Facebook, as with Twitter, mythification was not a common frame because the platform focuses on the ‘every day’, specifically on the rather mundane and passing issues of the day.



Flattery as a legitimization strategy:

Humanizing the grand

Complementary to mythmaking is flattery, which humanizes the grand. You can have a grand myth, as discussed earlier, but this myth should be grounded on human experience and on characters that are relatable to ordinary folk as well.

There were several instances in YouTube videos where political actors presented themselves as down-to-earth and ordinary to the people; in doing so, they became “human”. This served to cushion the grand halo that their names carried.

Despite running for the highest position in the country that is beset by several grand, historical narratives, the candidates are able to ground themselves as allies of the common people with their best interests at heart. This kind of humanization was particularly seen in videos that featured, or heavily mentioned, Marcos Jr. The weight that came with the Marcos name was further supplemented either through personal anecdotes or commentary from the video channel itself.

In one video series where wives and children of the presidential candidates were interviewed, Liza Araneta-Marcos mentioned that it was a sacrifice on her husband’s end to serve when they were already comfortable:

“

He’s a good guy, and I think it’s his time, you know? I mean, honestly, if we had our way, why would you enter politics? You’re already comfortable. It’s really to serve. When he says public service, he really wants to serve.”

One video from a native YouTube channel also included in its voiceover, how the Marcos administration paved the way for the country's "Golden Age" despite the negativity surrounding them:



"Marahil ay ilan sa inyo ay negatibo ang impresyon sa kanya; ngunit, kung hindi dahil sa uri ng pamamalakad at mga proyekto niya ay hindi maiuukit sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas ang Golden Age."

Marcos Jr. himself legitimized this narrative in his official campaign video, stating that his run was simply in the service of the people while propping up his non-defamatory campaign:



"Hindi naman tayo palaaway, hindi naman tayo naghahanap ng gulo. Ang hangad lang natin ay magkaroon ng disenteng buhay para sa ating sarili, para sa ating pamilya, para sa ating bansa."

What was interesting with this strategy on YouTube was the absence of an obvious antonym to this humanized identity. There was no "other" out there that was branded as grand. There was simply an active projection of the other, more humane side, of the political actor.

Q4 data, in particular, showed how pro-Marcos Jr. content concentrated on the testimonies for Marcos Jr. as a father and husband. There was no pronounced framing of his political persona that was typical of the rest of the presidential candidates.

On Facebook and Twitter, what grand referred to were not grand personalities, but rather grand ideals such as nationalism and patriotism. The candidates then were presented as the embodiment or the humanization of such grand ideals.

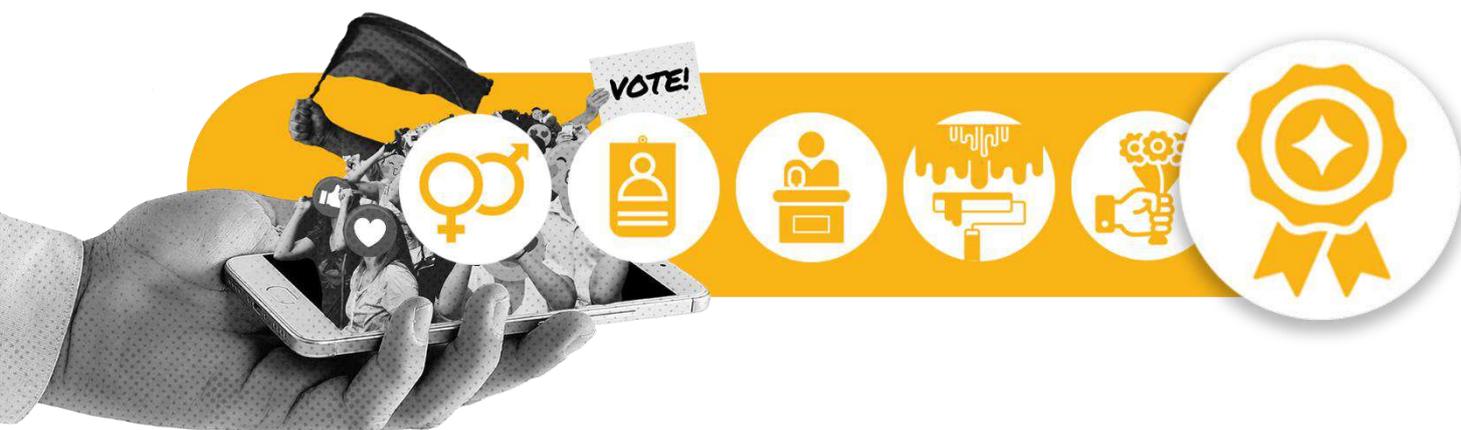
To do this, candidates used their clothing: Robredo constantly wore Filipiniana or Filipiniana-inspired attires, while the men wore Barong Tagalog, rather than a coat and tie, for formal wear. Moreover, Moreno and Pacquaio adorned their shirts with a pin of the Philippine flag.



Image 20.

Caption from a Twitter user (@sibugism) shows their support of the Leni-Kiko tandem through a pink-green ribbon

On Twitter, the followers of Robredo also appeared to have curated images of her. These pictures showed her always smiling and seemingly accessible. Even though she occupied the second highest position in the land, she was shown to be open and ready to interact with everybody.



Advertising competence and merits as a legitimization strategy:

The *resibo* for personal and professional capacities

As expected during any campaign season, the exhortation of the candidates' competence and merits would be a common fare in election discourses to legitimize the candidates as the best person for the job. This effort attempts to build a positive political image to increase the candidate's favorability among the electorate (Hacker, 1995).

We noted that a *resibo* culture was present on Twitter wherein posts that claimed a candidate's professional qualification and achievements would be accompanied by links that would help substantiate such claims, which were typically in the form of links to news articles. Twitter appeared to be a *kakampink* space; pro-Robredo tweets were accompanied by links to news coverage about Robredo's accomplishments as a public servant and her plan of action as a probable incoming president. These *resibos* or proofs on Twitter were often in the form of links to news articles.

Closer to elections, media- and COMELEC-sponsored debates became a popular Twitter discourse topic. As a political legitimization strategy, showing up in debates became an indicator of competence in tweets.



Image 21.
A tweet from Iskolokoy (@IskoKolokoy) demonstrates Bongbong Marcos incompetence by citing his absence in a presidential debate



Image 22.
ABS-CBN News (@ABSCBNNews) emphasizes VP Leni Robredo's track record of not skipping any credible debate

On Facebook, political actors also leveraged their affinity gestures by showing their track record towards certain groups or sectors of people who have been disenfranchised during President Duterte’s term in office. Similarly, by expressing their opinions towards national, social, and political issues, they were able to showcase their extensive understanding of their duties and roles as public officials.

Among the presidential candidates who deployed this strategy were Lacson, Marcos Jr., and Robredo, who aligned themselves with the victims of extrajudicial killings, overseas Filipino workers, and pandemic frontliners.



Image 23.
Facebook page Nabigay Ko Ng Lahat reposts a photo of Sen. Ping Lacson's support for OFWs disenfranchised during the pandemic

For example, a video posted by Robredo encouraged her supporters to help others by saying, “*Walang maliit na ambag; lahat mahalaga*”. It showed proof of how Robredo wanted to translate her political campaign “*radikal ang magmahal*” through volunteer acts. Moreover, by looking into the visual background of the said video, it manifested the “proof” that the Office of the Vice President had already been doing the volunteerism that they preached.

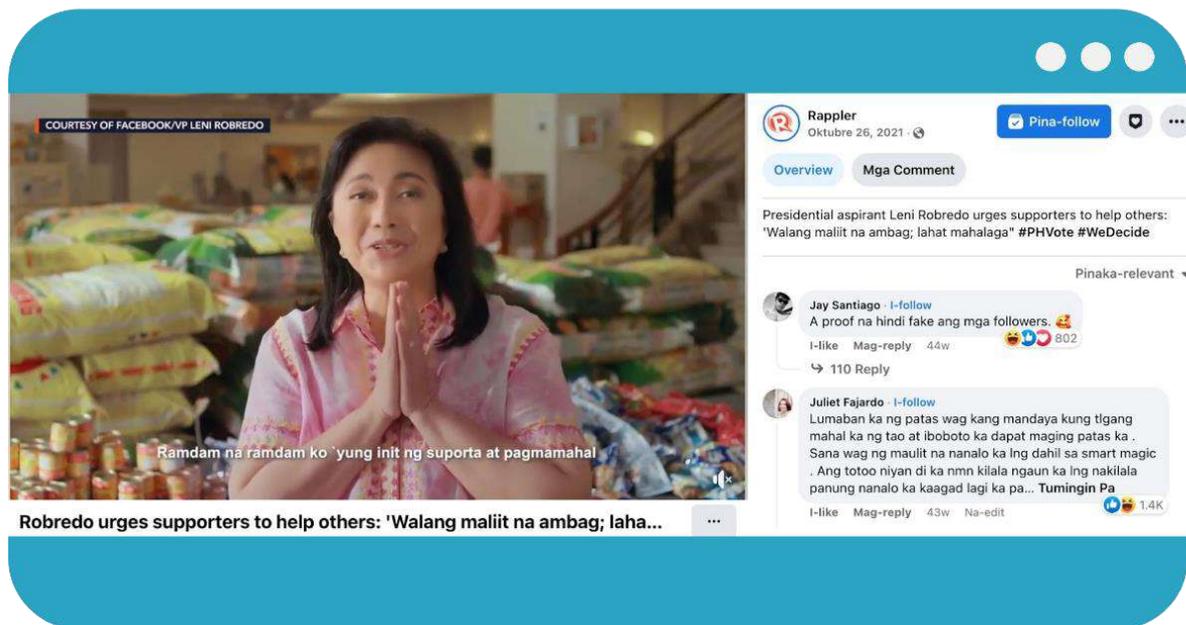


Image 24.
Rappler reposts a video from VP Leni Robredo’s office that showcases their current volunteering efforts

The competence frame showed how Robredo took care of everyone – from healthcare workers to the sewers whom she employed to produce masks and personal protection suits. What was advertised was her compassion in (1) giving work or assistance to people who would otherwise be unemployed during the pandemic and (2) providing support for the victims of extrajudicial killings.

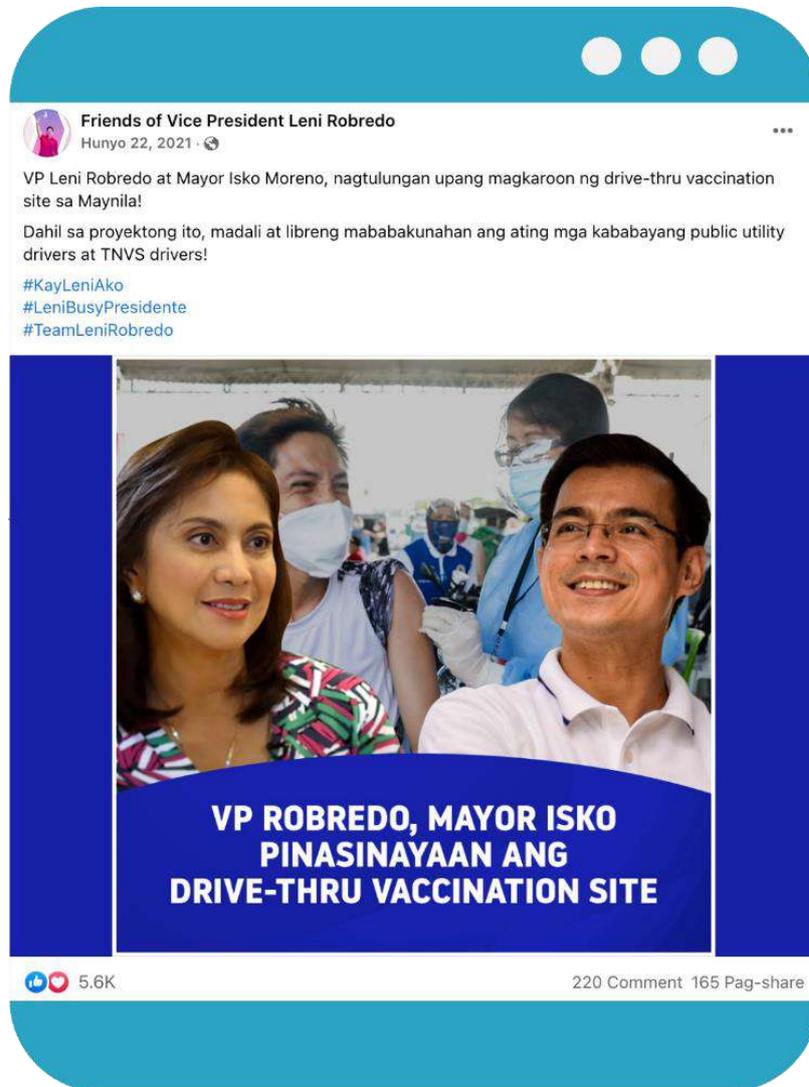


Image 25.

Partisan page Friends of Vice President Leni Robredo express their support of VP Leni Robredo and Mayor Isko Moreno's joint efforts in the drive-thru vaccination site in Manila

Moreover, this advertising approach with Robredo worked not just on enumerating what had been done but also on underscoring her consistency in implementing them.

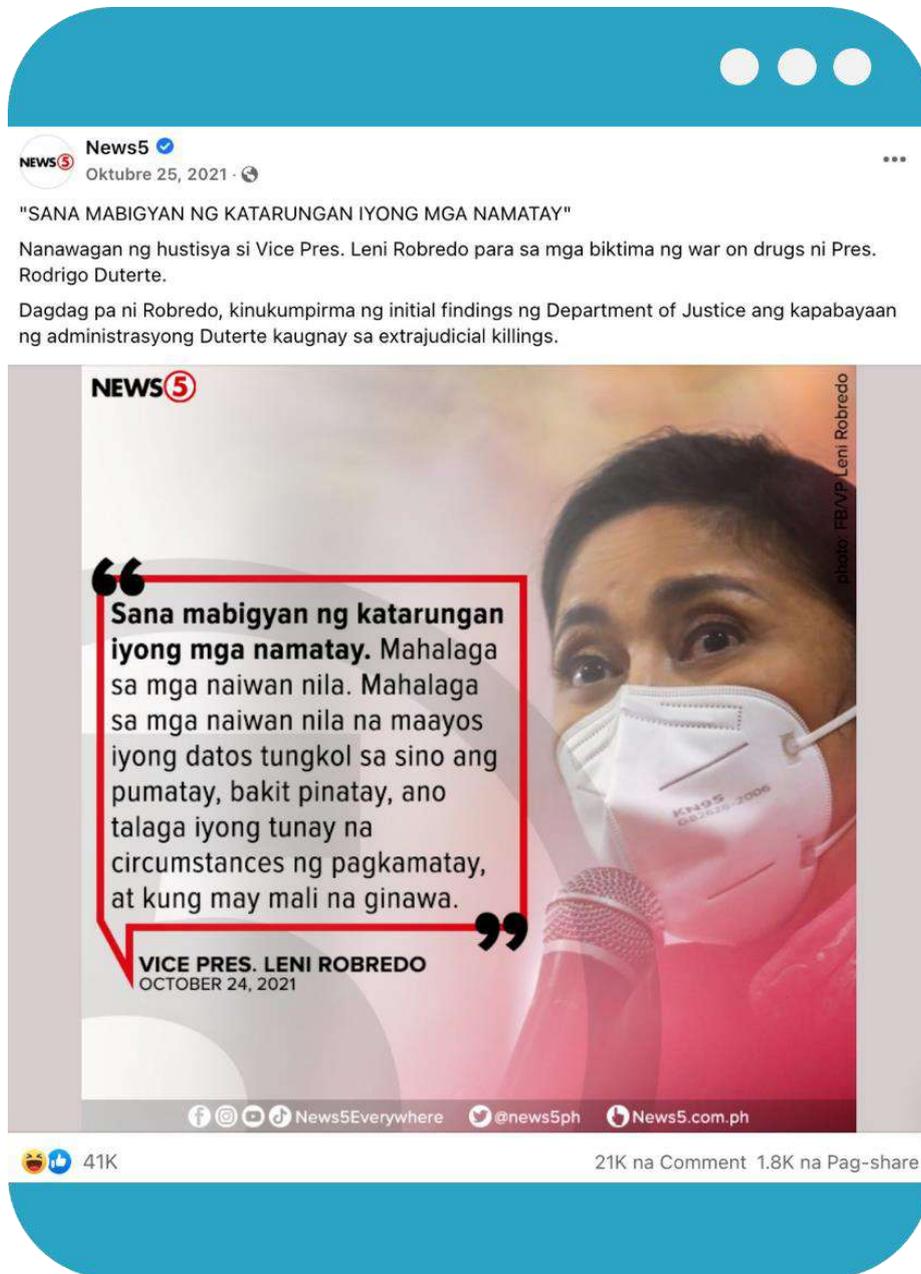


Image 26.

News5 shares a quote from VP Leni Robredo about giving justice to the victims of the war on drugs

Quite similar to Robredo was the case of Senator Bong Go and his Malasakit Centers. Even if Go ultimately did not run for the presidency, the dataset did capture the *resibo* for his initiatives.



Image 27.

Partisan page Sen. Bong Go Supporters lauds the senator's achievement of opening 130 Malasakit Centers across the country

For Marcos Jr., there was talk about his lack of personal and professional credentials. However, as the image below would show, he also showed proof of his concern for health workers, even though he did not appear to have a lot of *resibo* of his actual pandemic response.



Image 28.
 FB page of Bongbong Marcos shares a quote card expressing the former senator's support towards COVID-19 frontliners



Image 29.
 Mara Cepeda (@maracepeda) covers the operations of the Office of the Vice President's vaccine express at Malolos, Bulacan



Image 30.
ABS-CBN News (@ABSCBNNews) shares news of the OVP receiving the highest audit rating for third consecutive year



Image 31.
The Philippine Daily Inquirer shares VP Leni Robredo's promise to help victims of extrajudicial killings

On YouTube, the length of videos made it possible for political actors to use it as a vehicle for propping up their personal and professional merits. Actors were able to discuss, at length, how they were able to maximize their efforts when it came to facing different problems of the country. Moreno was particularly able to capitalize on the efforts he had done as Manila City Mayor – from the improvements in Manila Bay to his critique of the national COVID-19 response.

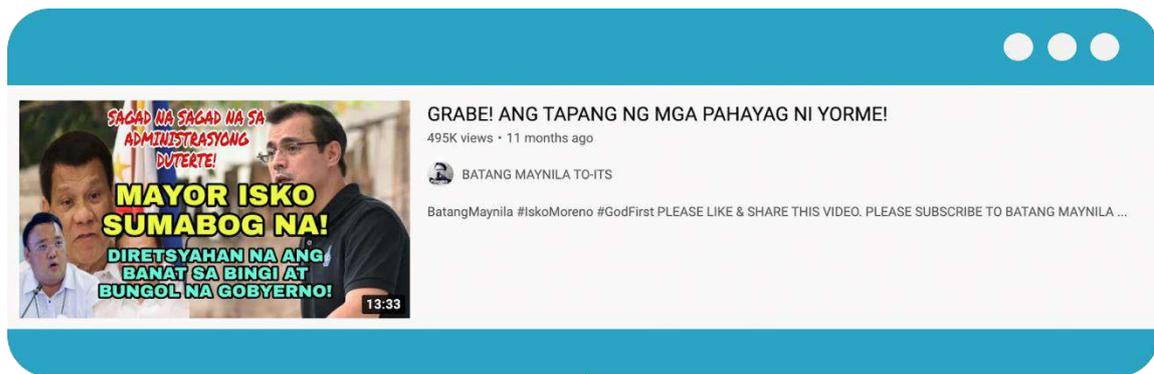


Image 32.

A thumbnail from a YouTube video (GRABE! ANG TAPANG NG MGA PAHAYAG NI YORME) highlights Isko Moreno's assertiveness as city mayor

Similarly, Robredo was able to advertise her professional merits on the platform. In one such video, an interviewee who belonged to Robredo's camp highlighted the spirit of volunteerism he had seen in her campaign. The interviewee regarded the unprecedented grassroots efforts of Robredo's campaign as one worthy of merit:



"I'm really banking on the fact that in every other election I have seen, I have not seen this level of citizen mobilization and volunteer engagement for any candidate. And that is really, I think, a special thing about this election. Regardless of the outcome, although I am pretty confident that the outcome will be positive for us, I think we are seeing a new stage in Philippine electoral politics because of this."

While the foregoing discussion highlights legitimation frames, the next section focuses on the converse: delegitimation, either through their own words or actions, or through their supporters.



Evidencing incompetence as a delegitimation strategy:

Exposing what is absent/lacking in the other

This frame encapsulates efforts to expose what is absent or lacking in other candidates. On Facebook, much of the talk revolved around apparent weaknesses in the pandemic response of the Duterte administration: from the requirement to use face shields, the undue length of the enhanced community quarantine, the alleged corruption in PhilHealth, the delayed and limited action to protect healthcare workers, and the slow repatriation of overseas Filipino workers (some of whom were stranded in various parts of the globe) among others.

Such an enumeration points to the weakness of the administration itself, and by extension, the candidates it is endorsing. The *resibo* culture on Twitter also operates to show government incompetence. News reports were used on Twitter to show the paucities in the Duterte administration's response.



Image 33.

A screenshot of Twitter user andrubonipeys's (@andrubonipeys) wordplay on the Duterte administration's tagline

Meanwhile, on YouTube, Pacquiao was often at the receiving end of allegations of incompetence. Bloggers amplified whatever he said, using various audio-visual effects; criticism against him demonstrated his supposed ignorance about different issues such as the pandemic “ayuda” or the West Philippine Sea. Though there was some framing of Moreno along the same lines, it was not as pronounced as what happened with Pacquiao.

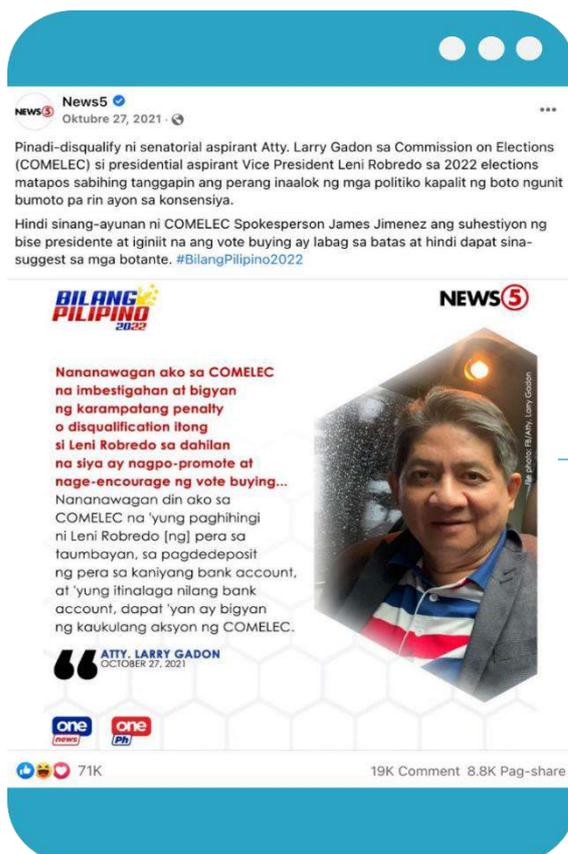


Factualizing opinion as a delegitimation strategy:

Rendering/framing opinions as factual messages

The second strategy of delegitimation is the rendering or framing of opinions as being factual. Quote cards from mainstream media outlets are able to amplify the opinions of political actors, even if these are not necessarily true.

The statements of President Duterte, as the highest official in the country, were often considered factual. His allusions to the supposed weaknesses of former Vice President Leni Robredo’s leadership style were circulated, through shared posts via Facebook without much opposition. In the process, the notion was able to gain traction and come across as an objective evaluation of Robredo.



In another case, Atty. Larry Gadon, a senatorial aspirant, urged COMELEC to open an investigation on Robredo. The quote card emphasized Gadon’s call to penalize and even disqualify Robredo’s candidacy, stating that she had promoted and encouraged vote-buying among Filipinos despite providing no evidentiary claim.

Image 34.

In a quote card from News 5, Atty. Larry Gadon raises a call to COMELEC to investigate VP Leni Robredo’s alleged encouragement of vote-buying practices

After Pacquiao exposed the alleged widespread corruption in President Duterte’s cabinet, the latter threatened to campaign against him and to show receipts of his own inadequacies in government. President Duterte’s presentation of Pacquiao, in the screenshots below also followed the same “factualization” process because of his level of authority. Virality, through repeated tweeting, appeared to imbue such comments with a semblance of truth.

Image 35.

INQUIRER.net shares President Rodrigo Duterte’s quote challenging Sen. Manny Pacquiao to name government agencies alleged of corruption

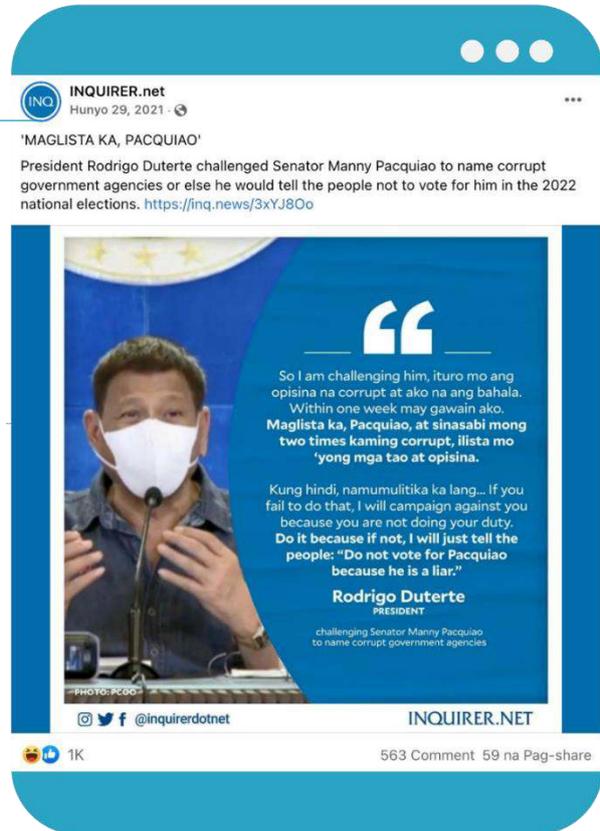
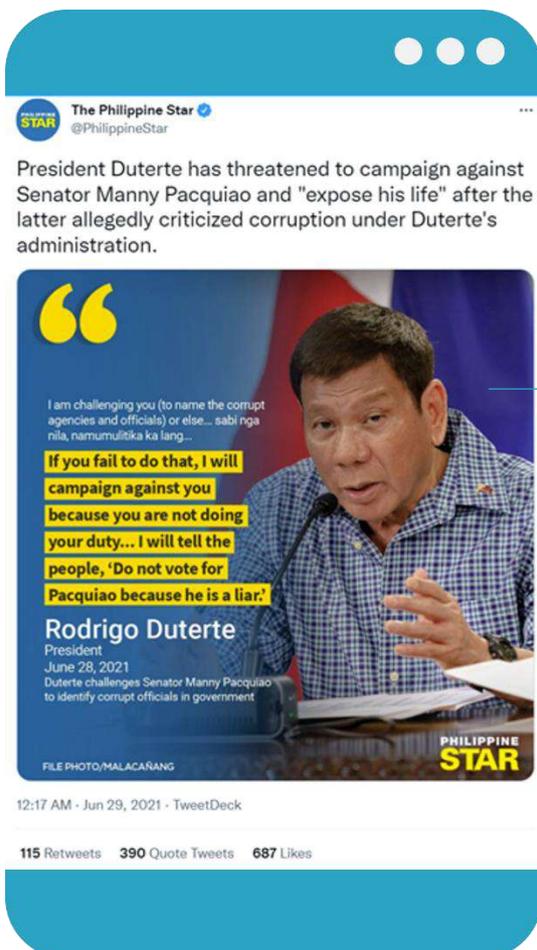


Image 36.

The Philippine Star (@PhilippineStar) reposts a quote of President Rodrigo Duterte’s contentions against Sen. Manny Pacquiao



On YouTube, factualizing was more insidious as the claims – which perhaps originated from Facebook or Twitter – was threaded as a complete story, presented with audio-visual effects, and supplemented with commentary. Phrases such as “*kumpirmado na inireport*” gave otherwise anecdotal data on Facebook or Twitter the semblance of a legitimate news report.

Moreover, commentators in the video displayed public posts from informal authority figures (i.e., the public) that were occasionally incendiary by nature. By giving a platform to these opinions, they were inadvertently, or perhaps implicitly, validating the discourse embedded in the post – and thus passed off the post as truth.

The commentator in the video did two things. First, he displayed the public post as is. He then read the caption out loud, imitating the tone set in the post. The so-called confirmation was not backed-up by any video or additional new document but was simply done as an echoing of media content that had already circulated. Here, “factualization” was made through a restatement or sometimes an expanded version of the original opinion. One such sample could be seen below:

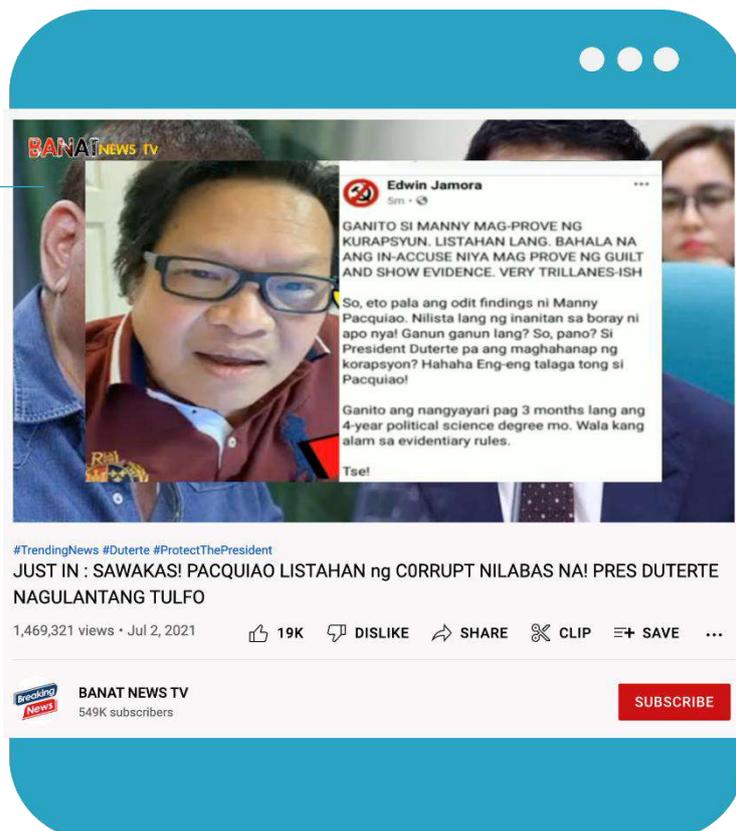


Image 37.
 Screen capture from the YouTube video *JUST IN : SAWAKAS! PACQUIAO LISTAHAN ng CORRUPT NILABAS NA! PRES DUTERTE NAGULANTANG TULFO* shows a Facebook post highlighting Sen. Manny Pacquiao’s incompetence



Attacking others as a delegitimation strategy:

Disparaging and denigrating the other

As opposed to other frames, this one elevates delegitimation by disparaging or denigrating other candidates. In popular speech, this refers to “*bardagulan*,” or headbutting online.

YouTube, in particular, became a breeding ground for incivility. Given the platform’s audiovisual affordance, it was rife with attacks made against one political actor while simultaneously propping up another political actor.

The expressions of simultaneous denigration and support were often enacted by the video host, who provided a running commentary on whatever issue may be in contention. This style imitated the political commentator of traditional broadcast media, though their authority was informal and their delivery less civil.

Among the targets of the hosts' vitriol was Pacquiao whose allegations of corruption within the Duterte government sparked a conversation in Q2. Given that President Duterte and Pacquiao had been allies through their party, PDP-Laban, these allegations of corruption saw the denigration of the senator and the simultaneous flattery of President Duterte's character. This show-off or confrontation was primed from the thumbnails of the videos alone:



Image 38.

Thumbnail from JUST IN : SAWAKAS! PACQUIAO LISTAHAN ng CORRUPT NILABAS NA! PRES DUTERTE NAGULANTANG TULFO highlights the tensions between Sen. Manny Pacquiao and President Rodrigo Duterte



Image 39.

Thumbnail from another video (JUST IN : BREAKING NEWS NAGKASAGUTAN! PRES. DUTERTE TINULDUKAN SI PACQUIAO PAHIYA SA SARILING SAGOT) amplifies the issue between Sen. Manny Pacquiao and President Rodrigo Duterte

These videos were devoted to debasing the character of Pacquiao and questioning his capacity as a legislator, or even a leader. To supplement their case, the videos presented screenshots or Facebook posts from netizens. Apart from screenshots, the hosts also joined in on the attacks via name-calling and aspersions (i.e., “very Trillanes-ish”, “eng-eng”), vulgarity (i.e., “diputa an”), condescension (“kawawa naman kasi walang alam”), and discrediting (“hindi naman ganito magsalita si Pacquiao”).

The use of attacking or demonizing rivals was evident – targets did not just attack the candidates themselves, but also other government officials, media institutions and critics. In a video that discussed Marcos Jr.’s lead in the polls despite his palpable absence in debates or media interviews, the host attacked the media personalities for their leading line of questioning:



“What if a candidate won't show up? [...] What is the logical explanation of these high and steady ratings despite the negative campaigning? And the obvious campaign baggage that he has? [...] Hindi ba naiintindihan ng taong ito na dumudura lang siya sa langit?”

Still on YouTube, this occupation to disparage and degrade Pacquiao appeared to be the primary content of a channel that was included in the sample. This channel seemed to be dedicated to attacking Pacquiao’s every move and statement, as well the members of his family.

On Facebook, the opposition was attacked as an enemy of the nation. Attacking political rivals or the political opposition, while propping themselves up as the party that could bring about genuine change, was demonstrated in several Facebook posts.

Actors employ this strategy by antagonizing their political opponents or critics, which then undermine the issues that their opponents are attempting to bring to light. The term “political opposition” tends to be nebulous, though the term is usually extended to anyone who does not belong to the political actor’s party or set of alliances.

For example, while talking about his shift of allegiance from the National Unity Party to Aksyon Demokratiko, Moreno alluded that he would not vote for anybody who had only inherited the position from a family member – referring to the endorsement of the NUP of then Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte.

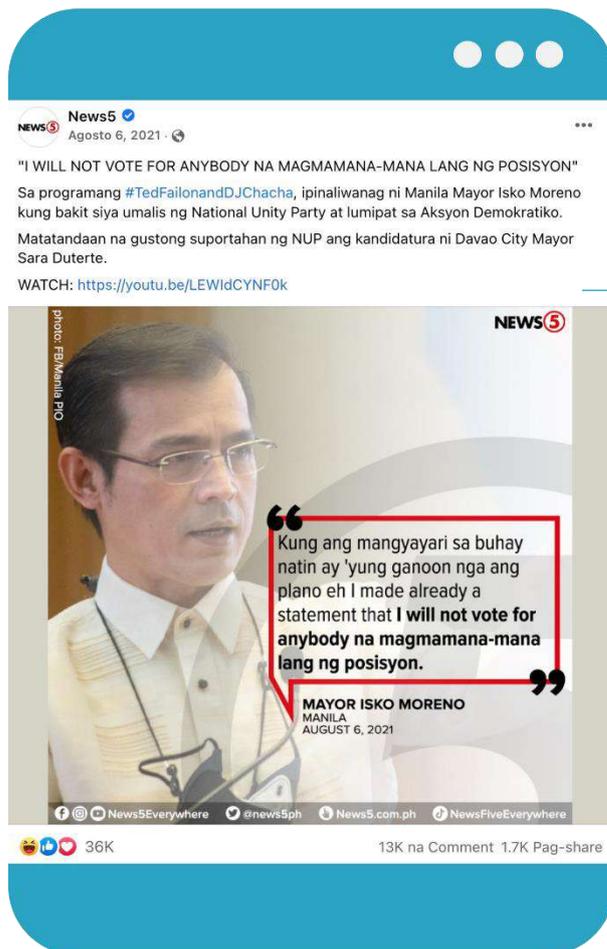


Image 40.
 Manila City Isko Moreno is quoted by News5 on his departure from the National Unity Party to Aksyon Demokratiko

In another case, a Facebook video quoted the presidential aspirant, Marcos Jr. as saying: “WAG ISISI SA ADMINISTRASYONG DUTERTE ANG PAGKAKAMALI NG NAKARAANG ADMINISTRASYON.” Marcos Jr. cautioned against blaming government inadequacies in the current administration alone, and instead redirected the brunt of the blame towards the previous administration, during which Benigno Aquino III served as president. First spoken by Marcos Jr. in an interview in Tutok Tulfo with Erwin Tulfo, the video was then reposted in the official page of Gadon who was part of UniTeam’s senatorial slate. Through this scenario, the Liberal party was further primed as the opposition that had hindered the progress of the country.



Image 41.

Interviewed by Erwin Tulfo, former senator Bongbong Marcos shifts the blame of the current problems of the Duterte government as coming from the previous administration

Aside from reposting quotes from political allies, partisan groups also selected unflattering photos from the opposition's campaign. The opposition was denigrated by referring to its supposedly minute size relative to the overwhelming majority of pro-government supporters. Pictures showing near-empty rallies of opposition groups were used to support such claims.

On the other hand, there were partisan pages that negatively framed their political opponents. Such posts appeared aggressive in challenging competing political camps. For instance, pro-Marcos and pro-Duterte Facebook pages might usually contain anti-Aquino or anti-*Dilawan* narratives. These posts banked on public opinion, particularly by those who framed themselves as "ordinary citizens", (i.e., independent content creators).

While this strengthened support for their chosen candidates as well as their own communities, it also created a clear “othering” of their political opponents. It caused further divide and conquer in the political spectrum.

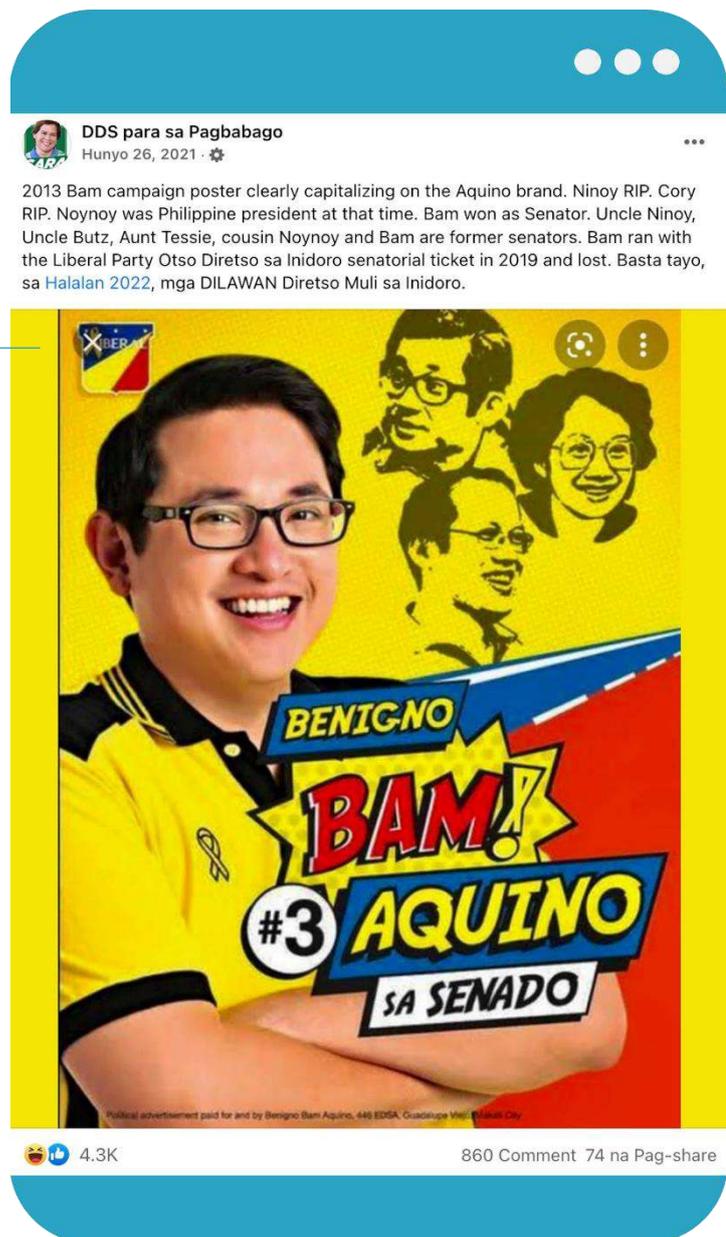


Image 42.
 Partisan page DDS para sa Pagbabago shares campaign material from former senator Bam Aquino that highlights his family members' legacies

There was an increasing trajectory of positive messaging of the Marcos-Duterte tandem in Q4. It highlighted how the said tandem was the better choice since supposedly, they did not engage in negative campaigning and they were not affiliated with anti-government groups; they were also described as “*hindi korap*” and “*totoo sila, hindi pamedia lang*”. The aforementioned statements were implicit in negatively framing other candidates.

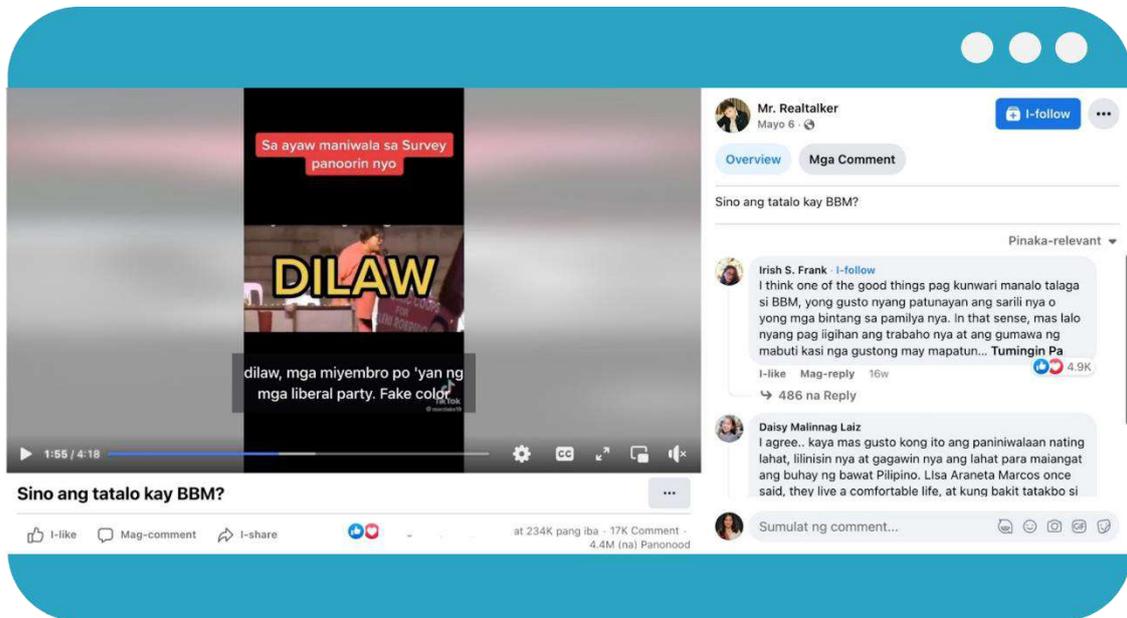


Image 43.

Partisan page Mr. Realtalker shares a Facebook video (Sino ang tatalo kay BBM?) that calls Robredo’s campaign team as “dilaw” and donning “fake colors”

Conversely, Twitter appeared to be a Robredo bailiwick, so references about her on the platform were positive in nature. On the rare occasions that she was attacked, such conversations were rather uncivil and the perpetrators were presented as the ugly other. While there were attacks against Marcos-Duterte tandem on Twitter, the reach for these posts were more minimal compared to engagements on Facebook.



Image 44.

Twitter user @jacques_lakan shares a tweet regarding vice-presidential candidate Sara Duterte



Doubt-seeding as a delegitimation strategy:

The power of insinuation and the sting of aspersion

In this frame, political actors insinuate various allegations against others; such aspersions are then echoed by their supporters on social media. Such insinuations also serve as clickbait for further engagement. We echo fellow Filipino scholars' naming of this, doubt or gossip seeding, as equivocal punctuation of headlines allows them to appear, not as declarative verifiable pronouncements but as insinuations (Soriano & Tandoc, 2022).

Many YouTube videos were able to use this delegitimization strategy. This mechanism particularly worked in favor of YouTube channels that provided election-related commentary. The hosts of these YouTube videos (who functioned as pseudo-political commentators) were able to capitalize on the length of a video format by first explaining the issue and the political actors on the table before expressing probable explanations on the case at hand. Even if the commentators did not explicitly pass off their words as truth, these opinions were able to sow doubt in people's minds.

In one video, a political commentator asserted that Marcos Jr.'s opponents must find it difficult to accept the high ratings:

“

“Siguro, hindi sila matanggap na kataas-taas nung 66 percent.”

“

“Kaya nakakabuwisit eh. Kung ikaw ang trailing behind, ika nga, kung ikaw ang number 2, [...] number 3, number 4, number 5, mabubuwisit ka dito.”

In another commentary piece from a separate channel, the host cast his opinion on the shifting allegiances of Pacquiao. The commentator began saying that “*may bulung-bulungan na na papasok si Pacquiao doon kasi nga, medyo naeechepwera na siya sa PDP*”. Although this was backed by Sotto III's next sentence in the news segment, Sotto III only said that it was a mere "possibility" and not a firm decision as the commentator said it was. He later connected this shift with Pacquiao’s ultimate ambitions to rise to the presidency:

“Pacquiao has his own money and power in terms of fame. Pero, maybe, nais sa pagiging pangulo, alam niyang kailangan niya ng mekanismo, o 'yung mga gagalaw sa baba kaya kailangan niya ng ka-party na gagalaw. Pero mukhang iniwan na siya e, [ng PDP].”

On Facebook, we observed this, ironically, with President Duterte. Whereas he was typically on the offense, as shown in the instance below, he was the subject of insinuation. Supposedly, he had a girlfriend. But, true to form, he deflected the issue by saying that his wife knew about it. This example illustrated that even a politician as wily as President Duterte could be on the receiving end of doubt-seeding.



Image 45.
GMA News shares a quote with regards to President Rodrigo Duterte meeting up with a past girlfriend

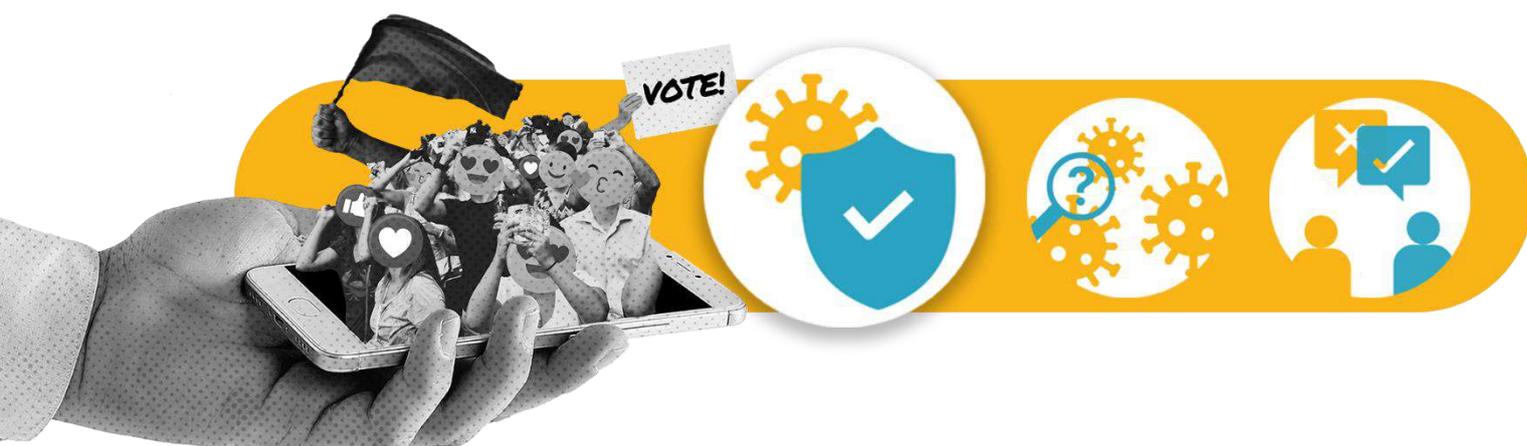
On Twitter, we noticed that such doubt-seeding happened not only with people but also with regard to the electoral process:



Image 46.
Twitter user @LakasNgTimog raises calls to be vigilant during the 2022 elections amid possible electoral fraud

Political legitimation of actors through issues

We noted that, as elections drew near, topics such as the pandemic and the drug war were increasingly overshadowed by discourses on the forthcoming elections.



Showcasing pandemic response to legitimize actors:

Pandemic response as *resibo* for competence

The range of responses to COVID-19 surfaced various leadership models at the local, national, and international levels (Kaufmann, 2020). Specifically, the timeliness, efficiency, and empathy of response to the global pandemic that afflicted our humanity from the first quarter of 2020 unsurprisingly surfaced as a universal test for governance. Thus, political actors' pandemic response became a *resibo* of their competence to govern. Showcasing a political actor's response to the pandemic consequently cropped up as a strategy to legitimize actors.

Given the publicized pandemic programs of the Office of the Vice President, Robredo emerged as the frontrunner in this political legitimization strategy on Twitter. Moreno’s vaccination strategy in the City of Manila was also a subject of discourse on Twitter.

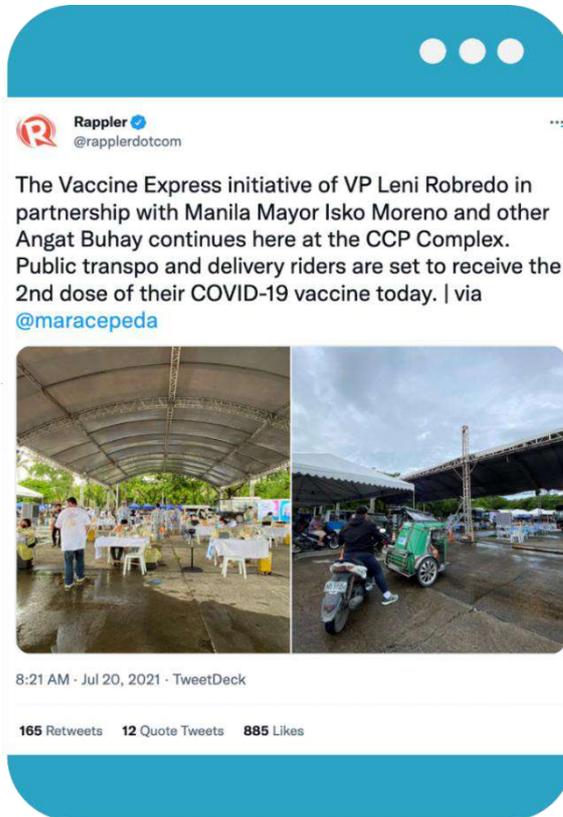


Image 47.
Rappler covers the vaccine express initiative, a joint effort by VP Leni Robredo and Mayor Isko Moreno, held at CCP Complex



Image 48.
News5 shares a quote from VP Leni Robredo on the mobile vaccination sites

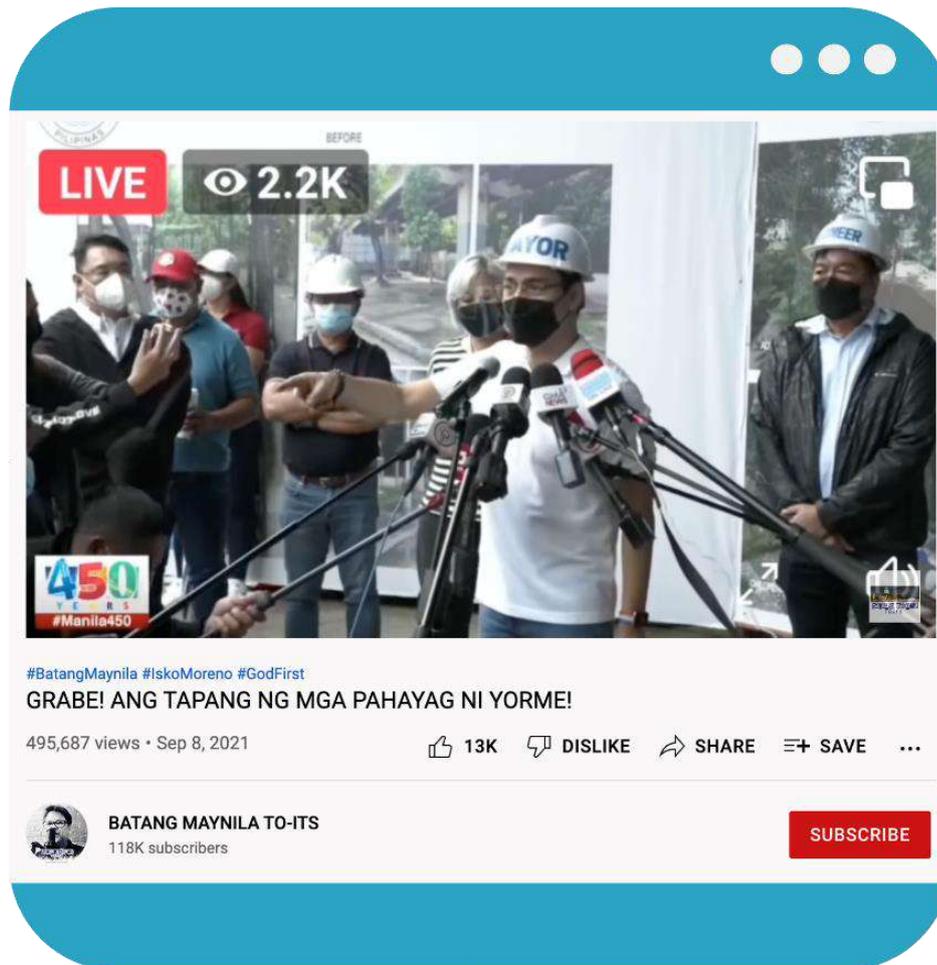


Image 49.
Screenshot taken from GRABE! ANG TAPANG NG MGA PAHAYAG NI YORME! demonstrates Mayor Isko Moreno's aggressive policy response

Similarly, the pandemic response was the territory of the former vice president and Manila mayor on Facebook. Talk about them focused on their hands-on leadership, which the public supposedly appreciated. Their pandemic response was also linked to their compassion and patriotism – two characteristics that their supporters particularly valued and often promoted about them.



Image 50.

Rappler shares a quote card from Mayor Isko Moreno concerning his stance on the face shield policy mandate

On YouTube, Moreno was again presented as an action man. His press conferences, shown live or archived on YouTube, appeared unplanned or spontaneous. He also assumed the persona of a credible leader, defending the purchase of controversial anti-COVID-19 medicines as if he was a medical doctor. Some might see this move as precocious, but it was depicted as proof of his political will to serve the public with courage and urgency.



Highlighting lack of pandemic response to delegitimize actors:

Pandemic non-response as resibo for incompetence

Converse to the earlier item was the poverty of pandemic action. On Facebook, the government was the main actor of concern, and it was delegitimized for its supposed poor pandemic response. However, it must be clarified that it was the government as an institution, and not President Duterte as its highest official, that was in question. However, on Twitter, personalities were mentioned because of the general actor-orientation of conversations there. Moreover, since its users seem to lean towards Robredo, President Duterte was actually cited for his poor pandemic mitigation action.

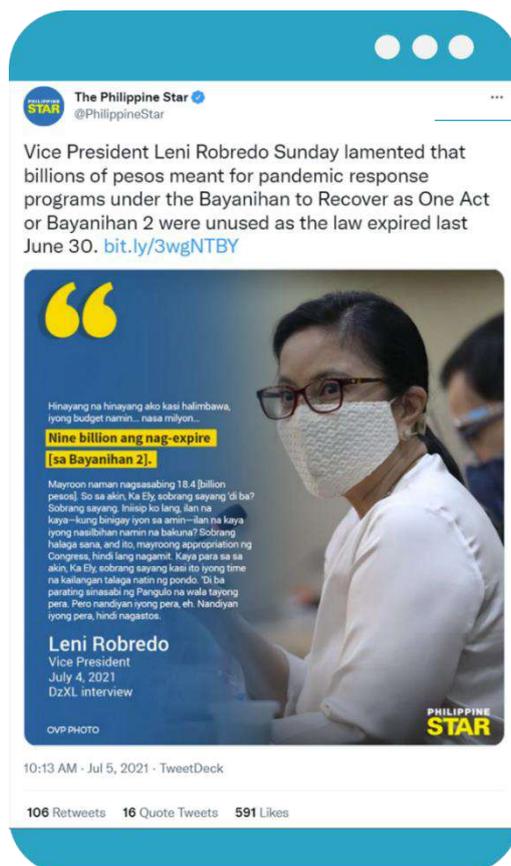


Image 51.
The Philippine Star (@PhilippineStar) shares VP Leni Robredo's stance on the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act

Image 52.
 CNN Philippines (@cnnphilippines)
 reports on VP Leni Robredo's call
 for more support towards
 healthcare workers



On YouTube, Moreno's stance with regard to the national COVID-19 pandemic response had similarly made waves. As the only presidential candidate serving at a local post immediately prior to his candidacy, he was able to remark on the insufficiencies of government response while propping himself and his local government unit up.

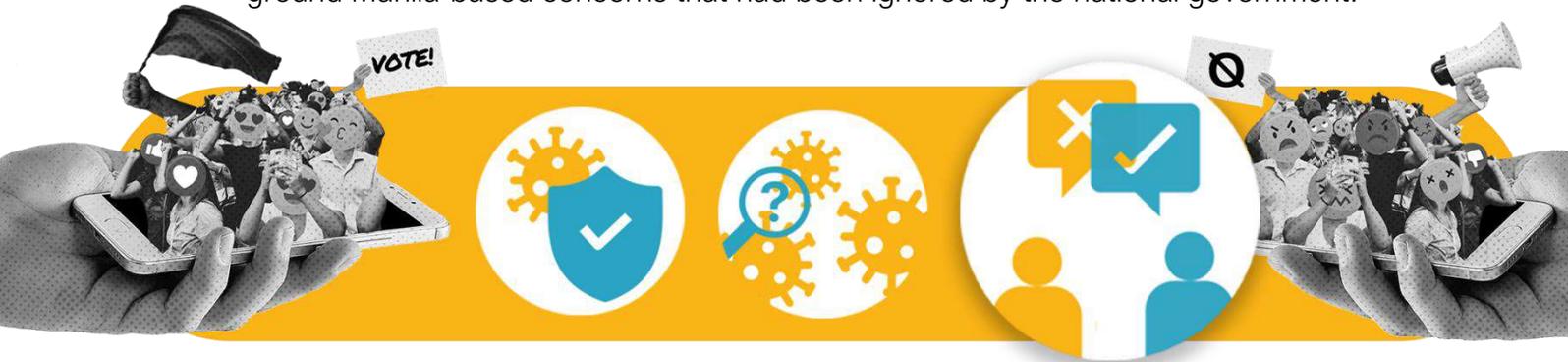
He called out politicians who prioritized securing face shields (*"Puro kayo plastic, eh 'di ba plastic 'yung face shield?"*) over getting medication needed for severe COVID-19 (e.g., Remdesivir and Tocilizumab). To further support his points, Moreno shared stories of people who had their lives and livelihoods threatened due to such government inadequacies:

"Pami-pamilya umiiyak, walang kasiguruhan; institusyon walang kasiguraduhan; negosyante, kabubukas pa lang, bumibili pa lang mga stock niya, isasara na natin next week."

"Politika ba 'yun? Oh 'yun ang tunay na sitwasyon sa baba?"

"Sila namumuhay sa Disneyland, hindi na sa reality."

By using stories of the people as examples for his points, Moreno was able to articulate how the overall dismal response to the COVID-19 pandemic could translate to real-life consequences. He called out politicians who were “living in Disneyland” as “*bungol (deaf)*” to people’s demands, and even appealed to the president to remove such politicians. Moreno further banked on the relatability of the micro concerns in his locality by translating health system issues to the on-the-ground Manila-based concerns that had been ignored by the national government.



Positionality articulation to legitimize or delegitimize actors:

Stance on the drug war, West Philippine Sea, Pharmally scandal, et cetera as a moral and character locator

Positionality articulation refers to a political stance or paradigm on an ongoing socio-political debate that a person actively prescribes to. This prescription is expressed through literal declarations in speeches, televised debates, and interviews, or in the context of the elections, through political platforms affirming or opposing existing practices.

Several issues were tackled in Facebook posts that legitimized or delegitimized actors. They served as *competence checks* since these stances acted as a barometer of how well they understood their duty as civic leaders – not just in their current capacities, but in their future capacities in the top national post.

In one such example, Moreno insisted that he would uphold the 2016 arbitration ruling on the West Philippine Sea. Meanwhile, Marcos Jr., Moreno, and Robredo, were able to show their comprehensive knowledge of pandemic issues through their criticisms of the vaccination efforts at both the local and national levels.



Image 53.
DZRH News reports Mayor Isko Moreno's potential government interventions towards the West Philippine Sea

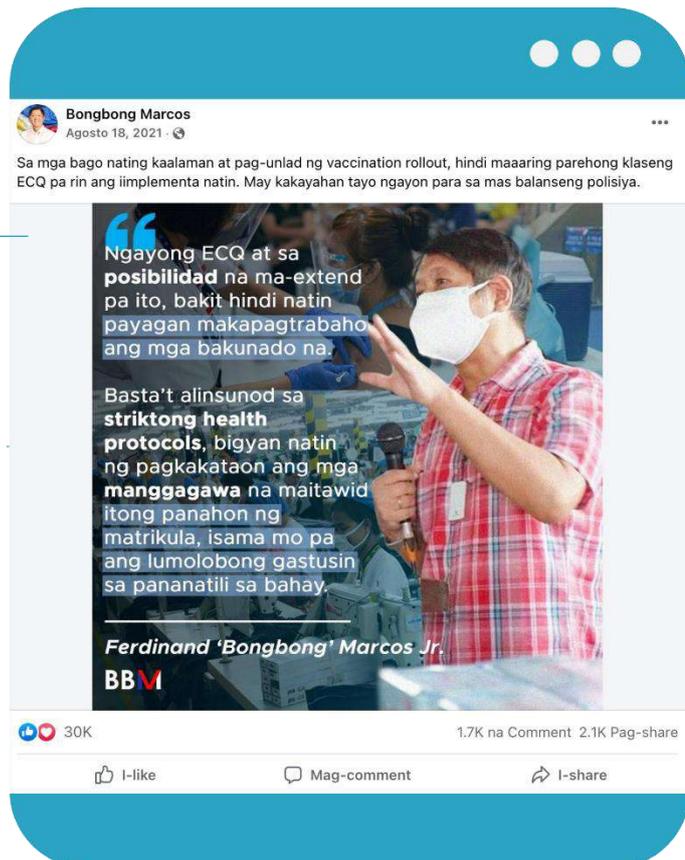


Image 54.
In a Facebook post, Bongbong Marcos encourages the government to craft more balanced policies for the vaccinated population

Articulations of one’s stances on issues also served as a moral and character compass for potential leaders. The drug war was a recurring topic as it intersected with several socio-economic issues faced by the country (e.g., poverty and criminality). An actor’s stance on the drug war was seen as a basis to legitimize character, political will, and leadership style appropriate for a president. For example, President Rodrigo Duterte continued to face these criticisms from his controversial war on drugs but responded to the prosecutors aggressively.

Conversely, Robredo offered a revamp of the drug war should she win the presidency but criticized the firm hand enacted during this time. In this case, an actor’s articulation of their stance towards the human rights violations committed during the drug war was also seen as an indicator of compassion.

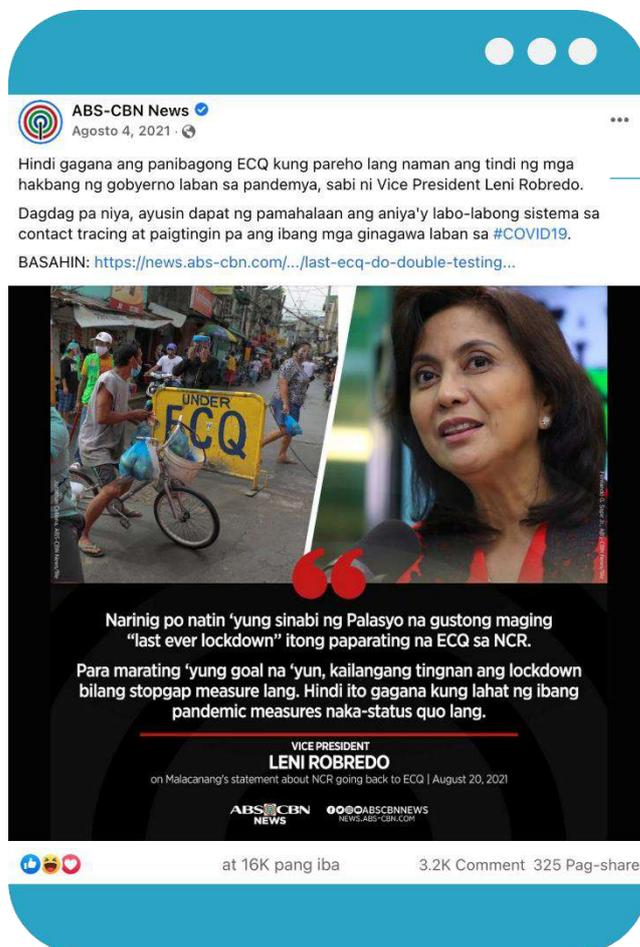


Image 55.
ABS-CBN News shares a quote from VP Leni Robredo who critiqued the current pandemic responses as only “stopgap” measures

Image 56.
Rappler covers President Rodrigo Duterte's response towards the ICC's recommendation of a formal investigation on the drug war



By expressing their stance about these issues, and casting judgment on the responses made by the current administration, the actors were able to project what kind of governance may be expected from them in the future.

During the first three quarters on YouTube, positionality articulation was often embedded in issues that resonate with their professional capacities. Among those highlighted issues included the Pharmally scandal, which gave attention to the corruption problems of the Duterte administration. Other political actors who had received relatively less attention, such as Lacson and Sotto III, were present in the sample due to their positions in the Senate debates. Regardless, these mentions and appearances were still brief – and often peripheral to the main subjects of the story.

One of the avenues where presidential candidates communicated their stances on several issues was through the presidential debates hosted by different organizations. Given that majority of the debates held across the official campaign

period did not count then-frontrunner Marcos Jr. in their presence, the candidates were able to hold their ground on several issues that beleaguered the country.

One video, in particular, showed the candidates probed about issues that were relevant to their campaign: economic recovery for Pacquiao; labor issues for de Guzman; corruption for Pacquiao, Lacson, and Robredo; and shifting political allegiances for Robredo and Moreno.

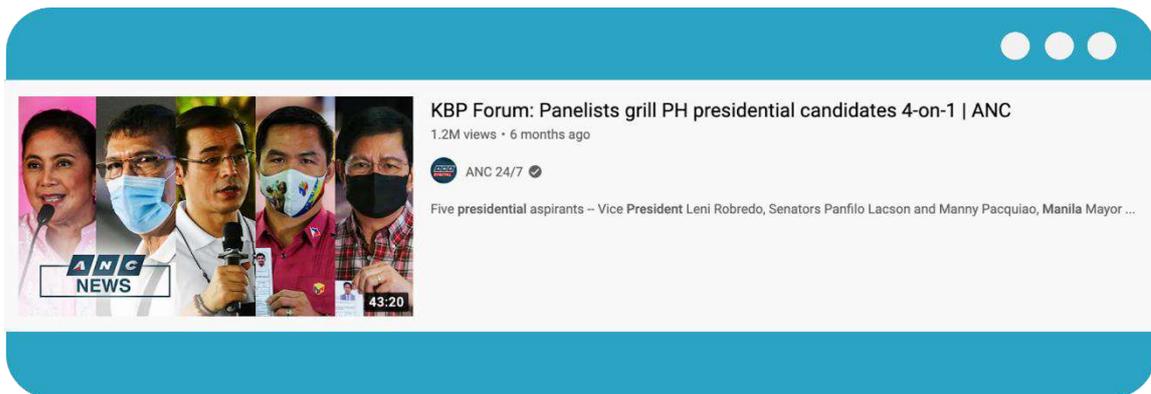
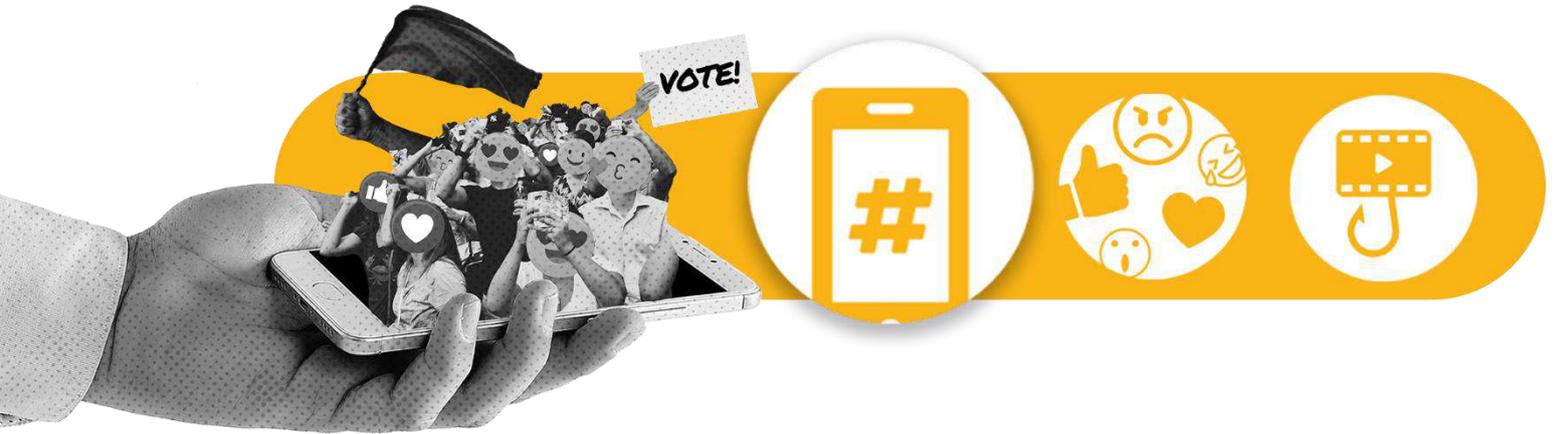


Image 57.

The video thumbnail of KBP Forum: Panelists grill PH presidential candidates 4-on-1 | ANC shows the five presidential candidates ready to face issues relevant to their campaign

While Marcos Jr. was absent from the samples, he was still brought up due to his father's legacy and his lead in the polls. His absence itself became its very own point of discussion and potential site for discourse. He seemed to be exempt from being morally evaluated vis-a-vis positionality articulations precisely because of the absence of a clear articulation, at least in these YouTube videos.

Political legitimation through platform-specific affordances



Use of hashtags for building and bridging communities:

Vernacular that generates visibility and connection

Hashtags, as a social media vernacular, generate visibility and connection, which can be strategically used to build communities of support and to serve as bridges across communities. On Twitter, hashtags help discourses emerge as trending topics and it is common for partisan users to excessively use hashtags to cascade and build public perceptions in the Twittersphere. Partisan users are also able to cross-party lines when they tweet and tag other parties through the inclusion of other parties' popular hashtags.

We observed that Robredo, Lacson, Marcos Jr., and Sara Duterte had established their official hashtags in tweets. However, since Twitter was predominantly occupied by supporters of Robredo, hashtags about the former vice president were also more common, such as #LetLeniLead and #LabanLeni2022, among others. Supporters of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte used hashtags like #BBM, #BringBackMarcos, and #SaraAll2022, while Lacson's supporters used hashtags like #PapaPing, #KakamPINGtunay, and #PingGaling.

Notably, however, pro-Robredo supporters utilized hashtags more often than the supporters of other candidates, showing their strategic use of hashtags to aid in politically legitimizing their candidate.



Image 58.
A Twitter caption by @JyyyJuris makes use of the hashtags deployed to support their chosen candidate (#BakitSiLeni, #HusayAtTibay, #LabanLeni2022)

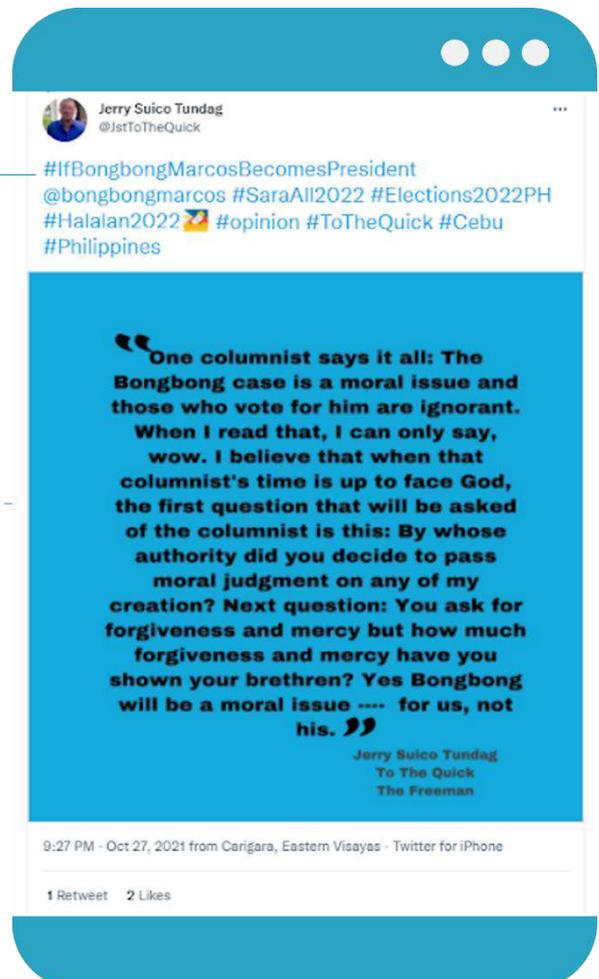


Image 59.
A Twitter caption by @JetToTheQuick makes use of the hashtags deployed to support their chosen candidate (#SaraAlli2022)



Image 60.

Inquirer (@inquirerdotnet) releases a news report on the sudden increase of the #LetLeniLead hashtag on Twitter



Use of icons for reactions, sound effects, comments, and polls:

Tools that provoke “patol”

On Facebook, posts employed hashtags to signify that it was an election-related post (#Halalan2022, #Eleksyon2022) or part of a political campaign (#AngatBuhay, #KayLeniAko, #LeniBusyPresidente, #TeamLeniRobredo). However, users of the platform relied mainly on reaction icons, comments, sound effects, and polls.

Comments abundantly used keywords that were equated with specific personalities but did not necessarily name the candidates. Among these keywords were *berdugo*, *lutang*, *lugaw*, *sinungaling*, and *magnanakaw* which triggered subsequent commentaries. As can be gleaned from these words, the comments leaned towards incivility, as supporters of contending parties argued their way using soundbites.

Reaction icons enabled users to register their sentiments about a post. However, they had since been appropriated in various election-related polls. Interestingly, the matching between an icon and a candidate also served to frame or direct the sentiment towards him or her.

The example illustrates how this works: Heart for Robredo, thumbs-up for Moreno, and care for Pacquiao. Conversely, it was a laugh for Lacson, a wow for Marcos Jr., and angry for Senator Bato de la Rosa.



Image 61.

Kapamilya Entertainment makes use of the five Facebook reaction functions to poll the public on their chosen presidential candidate

Given the wide range of personalities running for the top national post, there were also instances where the polls would not include the rest of the presidential candidates. In one instance, only Robredo and Marcos Jr. were represented as they were the top two candidates.



Image 62.

Pulso Ng Bayan - Eleksyon 2022 makes use of two Facebook reaction functions to conduct an informal survey between presidential aspirants Leni Robredo and Bongbong Marcos

The use of reactions was a mixed bag. Using a set of reactions could lead to biased results because the choices evoked specific sentiments that may or may not coincide with the sentiment of the original poster.

It is important to note that reactions typically need a “long press” to be activated, which might lead people to accidentally like a certain post. Users on Facebook may also like or be entertained by the said post, but not endorse the candidate the reaction is representing. In these cases, a “like” or “haha” reaction can be interpreted in several ways.

While Facebook polling is an easy way to gauge participants’ sentiments and maximize user engagement with one’s followers, it should not be treated as in any way reliable.



Use of video titles and thumbnails as clickbaits:

Platform doors as baits to the rabbit hole

Affordances unique to the YouTube platform dictate that a view cannot be registered without first clicking on the video. Given such a limitation, channels are implicitly urged to create “clickbait” titles, thumbnails, or headlines. These techniques cut across different political actors, actions, or issues, revealing just how fully woven it is into the fabric of the platform.

Approaches to clickbaiting varied. The first of these approaches included incorporating clickbait mechanisms into the titles of the videos. Linguistic expressions were used to express urgency (“JUST IN”) as well as surprise or disbelief (“HALA!”, “GRABE!”, “SA WAKAS!”). Both capitalization and sensationalized words were deployed to emphasize action points (e.g., “ISUMBONG MO”, “NAGULAT”, “NAGULANTANG!”, “DINUMOG”)



Next, the thumbnails themselves were able to showcase both the political actors and the political issues in question. Since YouTube thumbnails could be manually uploaded (i.e., they did not have to be a segment or portion of the video), the linguistic strategies could now run in parallel with visual strategies. These visual cues primarily included the actor involved in the issue, and the very issue taking place.

In some cases, these thumbnails could even include political actors who were not predominantly featured in the sample or may even be completely irrelevant to the issue being discussed. They were, nevertheless, displayed to curry more favor from potential viewers.

A sample of these thumbnails could be found below:



Image 63.

A video thumbnail from GRABE! ANG TAPANG NG MGA PAHAYAG NI YORME! where Mayor Isko Moreno is seen to criticize the current administration's response

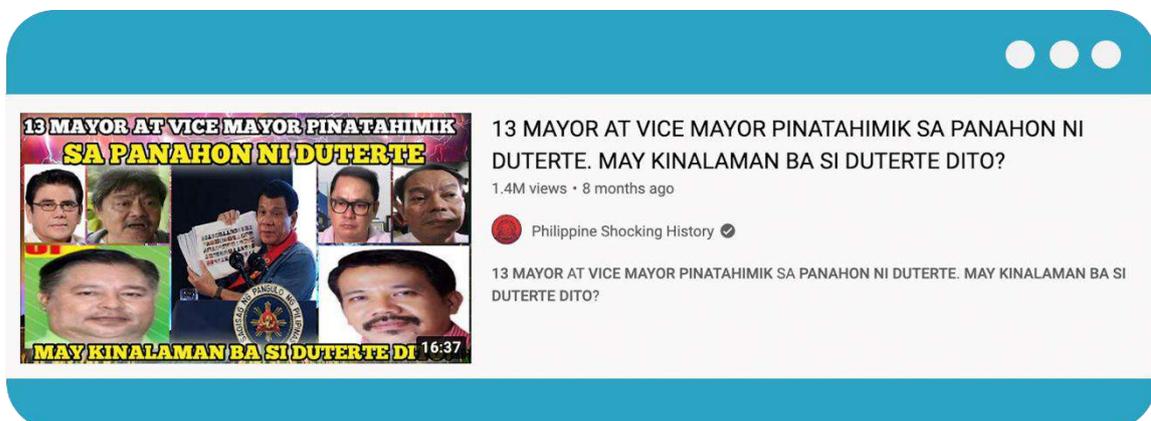


Image 64.

A video thumbnail from 13 MAYOR AT VICE MAYOR PINATAHIMIK SA PANAHON NI DUTERTE. MAY KINALAMAN BA SI DUTERTE DITO? that links President Duterte to local government issues

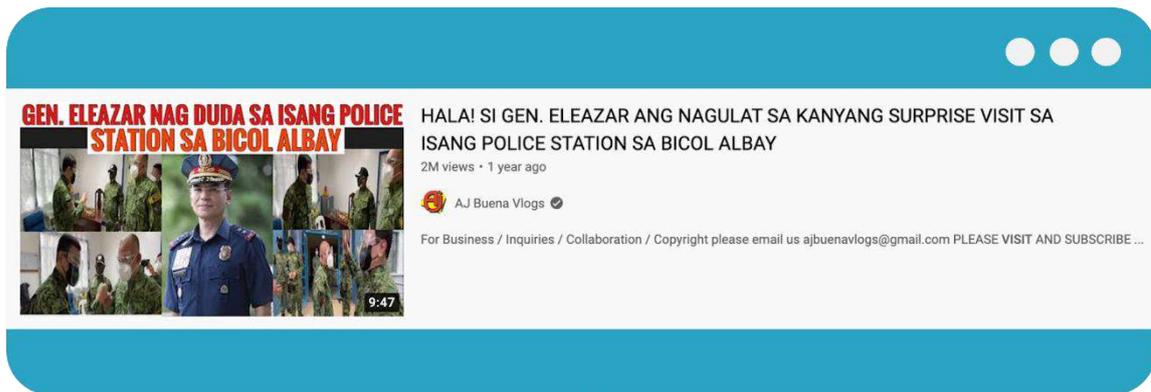


Image 65.

A video thumbnail from HALA! SI GEN. ELEAZAR ANG NAGULAT SA KANYANG SURPRISE VIST SA ISANG POLICE STATION SA BICOL ALBAY that shows Gen. Eleazar in his professional capacity as PNP chief

The audiovisual richness of the platform also added to more doors, and, therefore baits being unlatched.

The maximization of sound effects, audiovisual overlays, and active splicing of rather straightforward content can indeed keep the viewers cornered.

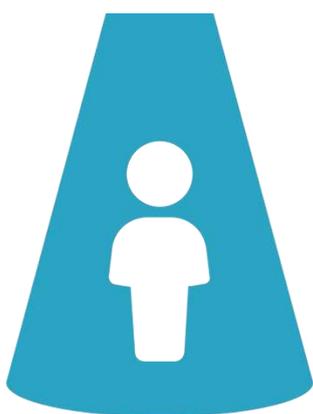
Through these strategies, the multimodality of the platform was maximized. As a result, potential viewers had all the more incentive to engage with the content of the video.

Likewise, YouTube showed the proliferation of packaging information/disinformation “as is”. While there may be information or disinformation happening online, the same may be amplified because it was shared online as is, whether by individuals, organizations, or media entities.

This was done by uploading content that had no context, timeline, or disclaimer. These videos, which were often composed of still photos edited in an auto-presentation matched with an automated voiceover, were amplifications of “information” that could have been checked or verified by the media organization which featured them originally in a supposedly credible news program.

There was a powerful magnification of “information as is” that, upon closer look, could use caution since the pronouncements are of national importance. What used to be a common media practice of full disclosure that the claim to truth was not yet verified as of airtime was palpably absent in these videos.

Also noticeable on YouTube, were the “absent others” in the discourse or what we call the active ignoring and active dodging of political actors.



Despite the circus of the national elections, there were only a few political actors who truly gained traction on YouTube. Emphasis is particularly placed on the presidential candidates, with Marcos Jr., Moreno, Pacquiao, and Robredo getting multiple mentions across actions. In the early quarters, Robredo was even completely absent from the videos that gained the highest reach. In the instances where Robredo was mentioned, she was inevitably linked to her opponents and to the current administration.

Vice-presidential candidates significantly lagged behind and were mostly featured in videos where they served their respective functions as public officials. For example, in the early quarters, Sotto III and Pangilinan were mentioned in their capacity as senators. Presidential candidate Ping Lacson, who was also serving as a senator at the time, was also mentioned due to the Senate investigation on the Pharmally scandal.

Some political actors were only present in election nominations, endorsements, and campaigns. Other public officials including Raffy Tulfo, Chiz Escudero, Guillermo Eleazar, Richard Gomez, and Jonvic Remulla were also featured in the samples. These public officials, many of whom were gunning for positions at the national level, were occasionally asked about their endorsements, which implicitly wrote them into the discourses surrounding the top-two highest posts in the country. When asked about these officials’ endorsements, or their justification of endorsements or stances despite issues, they were able to actively dodge them.

For example, when prompted about the hypocrisy of Richard Gomez playing Sergio Osmena III, a martial law victim, he deflected the question by shifting the issue to the Marcos achievements enjoyed by his constituency:

“Playing that role and actually doing work in local government are totally different things. Iba 'yung pag-aartista, iba 'yung pagiging politiko at pagtatakbo ng bayan. Bongbong Marcos is heavily favored here in the Leyte area because ever since, ang laki ng tulong na dinala 'yan dito. When the father was president, we had the San Juanico Bridge, the geothermal power plant, and up to now we're still using that geothermal power plant to this day. [...] All of us this is being remembered by the people.”

Most notably, messages relating to Marcos Jr. were mostly present in election-related events and actions. Interestingly, his absence in presidential debates did not completely exclude him from the conversation and has even become a discussion point.

For example, speaking on the Pulse Asia survey, Director Tabunda highlighted that, although there were some election-related issues for Marcos (eg. Marcos’s estate tax debt that served as the primary precursor to his disqualification case), voters did not see this as a primary concern for the polls. Instead, she highlighted that voters might be considering other things: “a large factor in favor of Senator Bongbong Marcos is his association with his father who is perceived to be a good leader”.

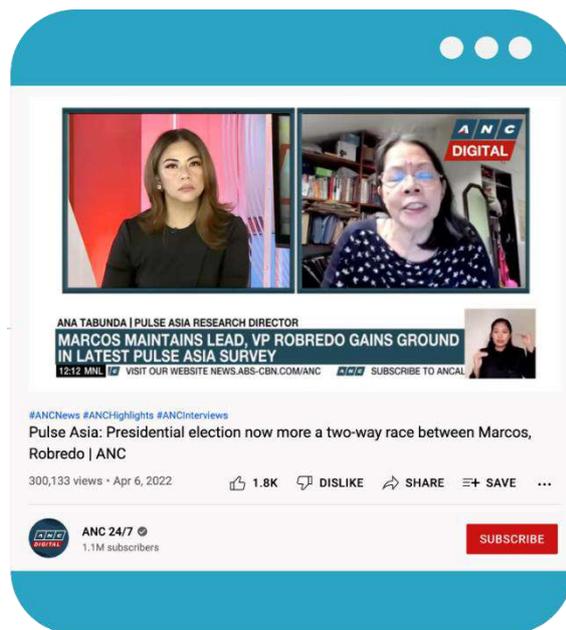


Image 66.

ANC 24/7 interviews the Pulse Asia Research Director regarding the recent polls that place Bongbong Marcos and Leni Robredo as the top two contenders

While Marcos Jr. was absent from the samples, he was still brought up due to his father’s legacy and his lead in the polls. His absence itself had become its very own point of discussion and site for discourse:

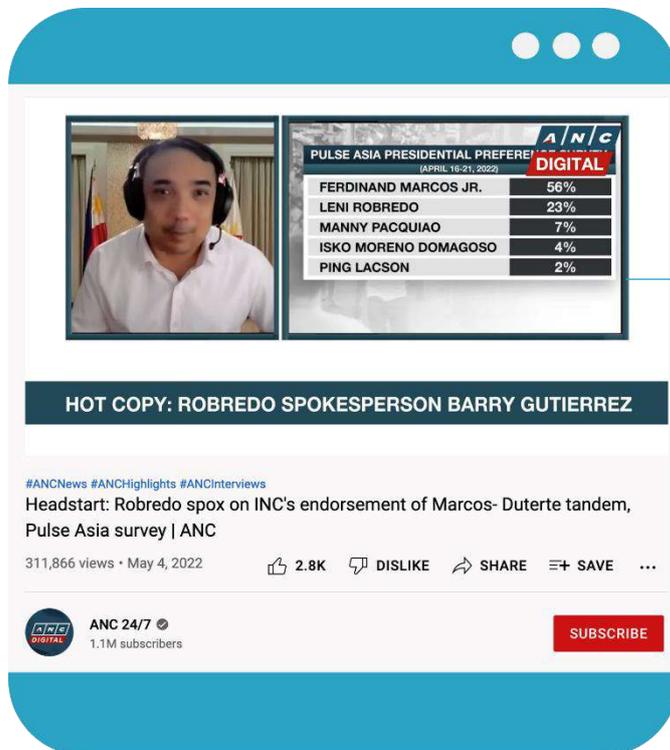


Image 67.
In an ANC 24/7 YouTube video, a spokesperson from VP Robredo’s camp comments on Marcos Jr.’s lead over VP Robredo

In a Kampanya Serye video, Karen Davila mentioned the spate of issues that Marcos Jr. had been confronted with all throughout the election season, from his lack of presence in the debates to his father’s and his family’s legacies. Marcos Jr. responded by shifting the focus to the lack of diversity of topics in the debates:

“No. I have attended debates. But I will not attend debates that ask the same questions over and over again. Look at this. So, you think what we did today and what we’re doing later, I think it is more important than a debate when we are going to talk about the same things over and over again.”

Political legitimization of actors through **issues**



Showcasing pandemic response to legitimize actors: Pandemic response as *resibo* for competence



Highlighting lack of pandemic response to delegitimize actors: Pandemic non-response as *resibo* for incompetence



Positionality articulation to legitimize or delegitimize actors: Stance on the drug war, West Philippine Sea, Pharmally scandal, et cetera as a moral and character locator

Political legitimization through **platform-specific affordances**



Use of hashtags for building and bridging communities: Vernacular that generates visibility and connection



Use of icons for reactions, sound effects, comments, and polls: Tools that provoke “patol”



Use of video titles and thumbnails as clickbaits: Platform doors as baits to the rabbit hole



POLITICAL LEGITIMATION IN THE 2022 PHILIPPINE GENERAL ELECTIONS



Political legitimization of **actors**



Gendering as a legitimization strategy: The action-oriented masculine and the process-focused feminine



Archotyping as a legitimization strategy: Organic branding meets prescribed branding



Authorization as a legitimization strategy: Linking actors with other personalities and titles



Mythification as a legitimization strategy: The quintessential grand as overarching narrative



Flattery as a legitimization strategy: Humanizing the grand



Advertising competence and merits as a legitimization strategy: The *resibo* for personal and professional capacities



Evidencing incompetence as a delegitimation strategy: Exposing what is absent/lacking in the other



Factualizing opinion as a delegitimation strategy: Rendering/framing opinions as factual messages



Attacking others as a delegitimation strategy: Disparaging and denigrating the other



Doubt-seeding as a delegitimation strategy: The power of insinuation and the sting of aspersion

Overarching analysis

Our key findings reveal that demand-side political legitimation exists in election discourses on social media, wherein members of the online public publish content to either legitimize or delegitimize political actors in their effort to surface the legitimacy of their preferred candidates for top executive posts. In the arena of public opinion, this allows members of the public to bestow upon their preferred candidates the rightfulness to govern while stripping such from candidates whom they believe to be incapable of being president and vice president.

Our key findings enable us to surface that political legitimation in election talk is replete with strategies that are personality-activated, “proof”-compelled, and highly polarized.



Political legitimation is personality-activated

The original goal of this study is to surface the discourses about various election issues. Ideally, online conversations revolve around the social issues which must be addressed by the prospective government. However, as the foregoing discussions demonstrate, talk in social media remains mainly about personalities in a self-reinforcing cycle. Because of this focus, alliances hinge upon personalities.

Conversations are more about whether one supports a candidate over the other. As a result, incivility (or *bardagulan*) emerges with contending commentators and reactors defending or attacking each other and their chosen candidates.

Indeed, online conversations legitimize a candidate's political persona which, once strengthened, then generates further talk. President Duterte, for example, was often the topic of conversation, which then reinforced his centrality in online discourses. His manner of speaking also made him an instigator, if not merely a part, of the conversation. He then succeeded in steering, for better or for worse, the conversation towards him, and a bit away from the issue at hand.

According to political observers, this personality-orientation emanates from the weak state of Philippine political parties (Lee, 2022; Zistel, 2022) and is exacerbated by social media platforms such as Facebook (Ndzendze, 2022).



Political legitimization is “proof”-compelled

The culture of rationalization persists in election discourses in social media as “proof”-compelled political legitimization subsists in election talk. As elections are popularly viewed as a rational exercise, communities of support are driven to provide *resibo* or evidence to legitimize the potency of their candidates.

Data revealed how uncontextualized content can also be taken as evidence and historical proof. Because of the rationalization of the language of *resibo*, the mere mention of associated words such as “research”, “kumpirmado”, “kitang-kitang”, or “klarong-klaro” has been seamlessly integrated into the language of proof-making.

Much of the narrative that is used to defend any kind of legacy, but most especially the Marcos legacy, still hinges on the contributions that Ferdinand Marcos Sr. had accomplished, while not acknowledging instances of the equally well-documented human rights violations during his presidency.



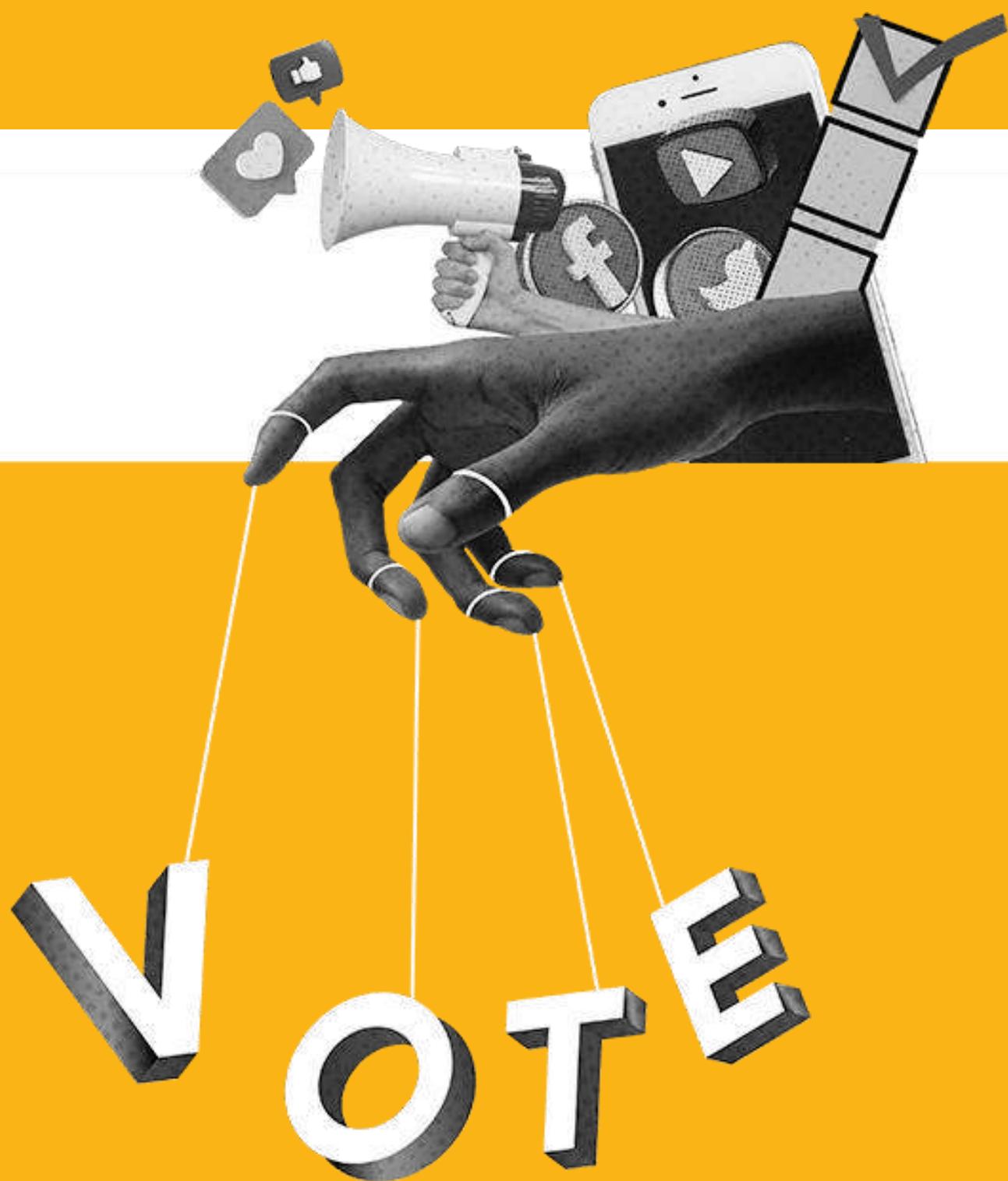
Political legitimation is highly-polarized

All three platforms have ample room for political polarization. As the elections drew nearer, the dichotomy between the “reds” and the “pinklawans” became increasingly more pronounced. Whereas informal surveys enacted during the first half of the year still saw the names of Isko, Pacquiao, and Ping Lacson featured fairly prominently in the samples, the final quarter saw an increased focus between Marcos Jr. and Robredo.

The polarized air in the platforms could provoke even the most neutral and stable political demeanor. If one is somewhere in the middle, the push to go to either extreme can be difficult to avoid. Even when there was supposed to be the third option in Moreno, the overall tone of legitimation suggested a very limiting either-or choice between two major camps.

This does no justice to the multi-partisan form of democracy that we are supposed to enjoy. Most especially towards the end of the election campaign, the platforms showed a sense of do-or-die in choosing the right president. Given the many options presented, the highly polarized political legitimation ironically authorized only two poles of rather complex issues the country needs to confront.

Any form of political polarization magnifies echo chambers and the homophily that resounds in them. Homophily is defined as the socio-cultural force among similar people occurring at a higher rate than among dissimilar people (McPherson et al., 2001). The absence of cross-cutting exchanges between polarized sides results in a one-sided perception that one’s views are shared by the majority (Bail et al., 2018).



A large, stylized white number '5' is centered on the page. The top bar of the '5' is a solid rectangle. The middle section is a horizontal bar containing the word 'CHAPTER' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The bottom curve of the '5' is a semi-circle.

CHAPTER

**Political manipulation
in the 2022 Philippine
General Election**

OVERVIEW

This section features special research reports on in-depth investigations on the emerging forms of political manipulation in the 2022 Philippine General Elections. The data analyzed in these reports are subsets of the Digital Public Pulse data and were processed using more specific and appropriate methods to answer each report's respective research questions.

The following sub-sections were originally published in Rappler and were presented in an online series organized by #FactFirstPH, a collaboration led by Rappler and supported by Meedan and the Google News Initiative.



THE EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL POLLING THROUGH 'KALYE SURVEYS'

By Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual, Anjenica U. Durana, and Myrnelle A. Cinco

Originally published on April 3, 2022 in [Rappler](#), Part 1 of 3

Kalye surveys are primarily person-on-the-street interviews that basically ask respondents their presidential vote choice for the May 2022 national elections. The interviews are video-documented and uploaded, and some are even live-streamed, on YouTube. There are also some *kalye survey* videos that feature the tallying of gathered responses on presidential vote choice and some are commentaries or explainers about *kalye surveys*.

Kalye surveys surfaced as a popular YouTube material among content creators. Our Philippine Media Monitoring Laboratory team started scanning YouTube using election-related keywords in May 2021, a year prior to the 2022 elections.

Kalye surveys started emerging as YouTube election-related content around September 2021, which falls within Quarter 2 of our data collection; and gained traction in terms of content uploads in October when candidates began filing their certificates of candidacy. As of January 2022, which is the end of our Quarter 3 monitoring, over 350 election-related videos have already been uploaded on YouTube.

Using a tool directly linked to the YouTube API, this article covers our review of *kalye survey* videos from YouTube channels that garnered the highest viewership metric as of the period of our data extraction:



Through quarterly intensity sampling, we identified the *kalye survey* content of the five YouTube channels with the most-watched videos when election-related *kalye surveys* began surfacing as YouTube content in Quarter 2 up to the end of Quarter 3, for a total of 10 channels across these two quarters.

While our review automatically included these 10 channels' *kalye survey* content that made it to the top 10 quarterly viewership metric, we expanded our review of videos that these channels posted beyond the videos that made it to the top-viewed metric.

We used maximum variation sampling in selecting other videos from the corpus of *kalye survey* videos that these channels uploaded to enable us to review variations in *kalye survey* content from these channels. A total of 43 *kalye survey* videos were reviewed.

'Gold standard' of survey practice

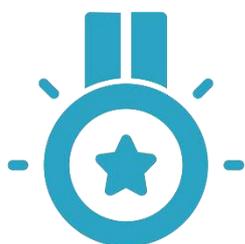
Survey is one of the most popular social science research methods for making sense of people's circumstances, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, habits, and behavior. While the conduct of surveys may appear as an intuitive and straightforward process of asking questions and acquiring answers, a scientific and ethically-grounded approach to its design, administration, analysis, and dissemination is key for surveys to validly and reliably contribute to sense-making.

Mainstream political polls, such as those conducted by Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations (SWS), survey registered voters' current voting intention, sentiments, and preferences. When political polls adhere to the gold standard of

practice, they can provide the best possible and meaningful estimate of the current electoral climate.

Essentially, the gold standard in surveys adheres to the principles of scientific and ethical practice across the entire phase of research – from conceptualization and research design; survey administration; data collection, processing, and storage; data analysis, interpretation, write-up; and up to all forms of research dissemination.

As such, results from political polls that adhered to the gold standard of practice can be utilized for further analysis to forecast trends and to calibrate (or recalibrate) political campaigns.



When a survey fails to follow the gold standard of practice, survey results could lead to misinformation.

Misinformation is misleading information, and decisions derived from misinformation could have negative consequences. Given that political poll results have been used in strategic campaigning, as reference for voting decisions, and as basis for comparing official election results, political polling groups must ensure that their design, administration, analysis, and dissemination strictly follow scientific and ethical standards in order to validly and reliably contribute to sense-making.

Established public opinion research groups are typically members of public opinion research organizations and social science research associations that prescribe a code of professional and ethical practice and that exact accountability among their members. The rise of ethics review boards in academic institutions is likewise key in upholding ethics and accountability in academe-based and academic-led research.

Thus, for public opinion research organizations and academic institutions, mechanisms and processes are in place to safeguard and enforce the gold standard of scientific and ethical practice.

'Kalye surveys' and mainstream political polls

Kalye surveys are generally packaged as an “alternative” to the mainstream political polls conducted by established public opinion research organizations and academic institutions.

Unlike mainstream political polling wherein the process of data collection is neither video documented nor publicly disseminated, *kalye surveys* reflect a constructivist approach in chronicling the survey enumerator’s administration of the survey – from providing an opening spiel, approaching prospective respondents, asking the main question and, at times, even follow-up questions, interacting with respondents through arbitrary reactions and side comments, recording of vote choice, tallying of responses, up to the delivery of wrap-up statements.

Unlike the survey enumerators of mainstream political polling groups who work behind the scenes, YouTube *kalye survey* content creators also typically perform the role of an on-camera survey enumerator, result aggregator, and all-around content host.



Kalye surveys attempt to claim authenticity as individuals were basic presidential vote choice question, a contrast to the public anonymity maintained for filmed while responding to the participants of mainstream public opinion surveys. Kalye surveys aim to instantly inform viewers about the respondent’s presidential vote choice as the preference is articulated, unlike in public opinion surveys which reveal results only after full data collection and in aggregated form.

Kalye surveys likewise endeavor to be entertaining to entice viewers to watch the video, as made evident by the framing of the video title as well as the affable and conversational conduct of the survey, which is again a contrast to the rather formal and sedate manner of disseminating technical results characteristic of public opinion studies.

There are also *kalye surveys* that do not disguise their hyperpartisanship, which is different from how mainstream political groups would endeavor to maintain objectivity across the entire phase of the research.

However, even if *kalye surveys* are packaged differently from mainstream political polling, *kalye surveys* should still be expected to follow the same gold standard of scientific and ethical practice, especially if the intended outputs of the survey is to serve the purpose of public information.

In the second and third parts of this series, we will be presenting instances where *kalye surveys* tend to deviate from the gold standard of practice. We will also be offering basic and ethically-grounded surveys.

YOUR GUIDE TO ETHICAL SURVEYS

To produce legitimate and credible surveys, it is important that we observe ethical practices. Here are some of the things to consider in ensuring ethically-grounded surveys!

View reality objectively to avoid bias

Ask valid and reliable questions to generate valid and reliable answers

Obtain informed consent



Draw a representative sample to be able to make inferences about the population

Count incidences to make sense of observations

Honor respondents' voluntary participation and voluntary non-participation

'Kalye surveys' and deviation from scientific standards of research

By Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual, Anjenica U. Durana, and Myrnelle A. Cinco
Originally published on April 3, 2022 in [Rappler](#), Part 2 of 3

For surveys, the demand for scientific rigor is anchored on its positivist roots, which predisposes it to view reality objectively to avoid bias, to ask valid and reliable questions to generate valid and reliable answers, to draw a representative sample to enable making inferences about the population, and to count incidences to make sense of observations.

PRESCRIPTION 1

View reality objectively to avoid bias

In order to view reality objectively, surveys utilize a standardized questionnaire, which contains a standard set of thoroughly-designed questions and, if applicable, a standard set of meticulously-crafted response options, that is then administered to an adequately-sized and randomly selected set of respondents that represent a target population.

This safeguards the survey from subjective biases that may arise in questionnaire construction and administration as well as in respondent selection. Unbiased questionnaire construction and administration and unbiased respondent selection allow for impartial data collection and documentation.

Our review of *kalye survey* videos revealed the survey enumerator's tendency to conduct the survey in an unstandardized manner across all respondents – e.g., unsystematic respondent selection, inconsistent phrasing of questions and response options, arbitrary

asking of follow-up questions, non-uniform method of recording responses. These incidents tend to introduce bias which compromises the objectivity of the survey.

It is rather common across *kalye surveys* for the survey enumerator to inconsistently phrase the main question. For instance, one enumerator would ask, “*Survey lang, Sir, sino presidente ‘nyo ngayong darating na halalan?*,” then would shift to another variation when asking another respondent, “*Sino sa anim ang napupusuan ‘nyong iboto ngayong darating na halalan?*,” or any other variations of these. We also observed an enumerator inconsistently phrase the follow-up question using these variations: “*Dito, Sir, wala kang tiwala sa iba?*,” “*Naniniwala ba kayo na siya [Candidate X] ang ina/ama ng bayan?*,” “*Kay [Candidate X], ina/ama ng bayan, ayaw ‘nyo po?*”

There are also occasions when a survey enumerator would affirm the expressed vote choice of the respondent; for example, a respondent said, “*Hindi siya mangungurakot,*” to which the enumerator replied, “*...talagang mababago ang Pilipinas.*” It is also common for some enumerators to offer additional comments, “*Kay [Candidate X], ma’am, magbibigay daw ng bahay.*”

When a respondent commented, “*Hindi ko bet ang babae,*” the enumerator replied, “*Ah, so gusto mo dapat yung matapang.*” Some enumerators or even some film crew would feed possible answers to the respondent. In one instance, as the respondent was forming her answer to the follow-up question, which asked why she did not choose a particular candidate, the film crew supplied, “*Mag-aral daw muna kasi,*” which was then echoed by the respondent, “*Mag-aral muna.*”

We also noted occurrences of hyperpartisanship. We caught survey enumerators who hyped up the answer of respondents when it favored a particular candidate. For example, one enumerator, in an attempt to prod the respondents to repeat their vote choice in a louder and more emphatic manner, would repeat the question, “*Sino ulit iboboto mo?*” In another instance, an enumerator would allow the group of respondents to chant and cheer for the favored candidate’s name.

In one video, we caught a survey enumerator arguing against the vote choice of a respondent. This video was edited to also incorporate video clips of the favored candidate’s supporters that appear to echo and support the enumerator’s arguments.

In another occasion, the survey enumerator disclosed his presidential bet when the respondent asked him about it, “[Candidate X] po ako.”

Thus, survey literacy training can help explain the importance of objectivity, sharpen the skills necessary for designing and implementing objective surveys, and introduce samples of codified protocols that outline how to professionally conduct surveys.

Moreover, since content creators function as enumerators, literacy training can also help them realize how they can affect respondents’ answers, which consequently introduces bias, and guide them on how such can be avoided when surveys are professionally administered.

For instance, enumerators must avoid behaviors such as reacting to respondents’ answers, giving side comments, and offering interpretation to respondents while the survey is ongoing.

PRESCRIPTION 2

Ask valid and reliable questions to generate valid and reliable answers

In order to ask valid and reliable questions, survey instrument development needs to follow the deductive approach, which is a scientifically-guided transformation of concepts into variables and variables into measures. This process produces measurement validity and reliability, wherein a questionnaire contains a set of well-calibrated questions and response options that is capable of sufficiently measuring the variables that the survey intends to measure at a certain point in time.

A survey questionnaire with measurement validity and reliability has been pretested to confirm its capability of being standardly administered across the survey’s adequately-sized and randomly selected set of respondents. Since a survey questionnaire also functions as a communication device, a questionnaire with measurement validity and reliability has been checked for its capability to effectively

and efficiently articulate the set of instructions, questions, and response options to its target respondents.

Hence, the scientific process produces a survey questionnaire that is not haphazardly designed. By extension, the scientific process also calls for a systematic administration of the survey so that the set of survey questions and response options is not carelessly asked. Asking valid and reliable questions and presenting valid and reliable response options facilitate the generation of valid and reliable answers.

Our review of *kalye survey* videos bared that the main question is essentially phrased to draw presidential vote choice in a language that is accessible to the respondents. However, some enumerators asked this question in an open-ended manner, some aided respondents with a list of candidate options, while some offered options only after being prodded for it by the respondents. As earlier pointed out, there are enumerators who were inconsistent in their question and response option phrasing. There are also enumerators who arbitrarily asked some respondents to explain their vote choice.

The capricious pattern of asking questions, providing response options, and adding follow-up questions runs contrary to the systematic prescription of the scientific process, which clearly risks the validity and reliability of survey results.

Survey literacy training should then instruct *kalye survey* content creators on how to properly phrase vote choice questions and response options. Content creators can follow the lead of mainstream polling groups when doing so. They may even consult

peer-reviewed studies to gather possibilities for question and response option phrasing. These options, which have been tried and tested, are publicly accessible and may be used in rolling out *kalye surveys*.

The value of careful and standard administration of questions across the entire pool of respondents must also be emphasized to content creators. The exact phrasing of questions and response options should be read like a script across the respondent pool, without deviation. The standardized manner of survey administration helps safeguard the survey from any subjective biases that may emanate from inconsistent modes of questioning and response option administration.

PRESCRIPTION 3

Draw a representative sample to be able to make inferences about the population

A survey's sampling design should generate a representative sample, which is basically an adequately-sized and randomly selected set of respondents from identified segments of the target population. Having a representative sample is a requirement to be able to test whether survey results can be used to make inferences about the larger population where the sample came from.

From such testing, called inferential testing, decisions can be made whether results computed from the representative sample are within an acceptable confidence level and tolerable margin of error, and thus, can be used to describe the characteristics of the target population as well. Essentially, a survey has achieved external validity when results obtained from its representative sample can be used to make inferences about the target population.

It is evident in the *kalye survey* videos that respondents are selected through convenience sampling technique as survey enumerators intercept prospective respondents as they go about their daily lives – e.g., on the streets, in

public markets, around food stalls, in a public transport terminal. This is a non-random manner of selecting respondents, which has repercussions on the result’s potential for generalizability.

There are even instances where some intercepted respondents are not residents of the video’s claimed target locale population. We captured an enumerator saying, *“Okay lang po kahit hindi kayo taga dito, kung meron kayong bet na presidente sa susunod na eleksyon.”*

As such, *kalye surveys* should be careful when framing the results of their survey so as not to misinform the viewers that their results speak for a group beyond the sample of respondents.

Can surveys with respondents drawn from non-random sampling techniques be considered scientific?

While the gold standard prescribes random sampling, social science research does allow for non-random techniques. However, data from non-random samples must only be used to describe the pool of respondents and not the larger population.

In fact, we observed that there are some *kalye survey* videos that did not attempt to generalize their findings, which is the ideal and recommended track to take, given that the members of their sample were non-randomly drawn. One enumerator even provided a disclaimer that the results of the survey cannot be expected to exactly predict election results, *“Unfair naman sa mga kandidato kung sabihin kong sure na yan, [Candidate X] na yan.”*

We also noted one occasion when the survey enumerator allowed a respondent to take over survey enumeration. This respondent took the whiteboard from the enumerator and proceeded to lead the enumerator to a location where she perceived to intercept potential respondents who will favor a particular candidate. The respondent remarked: *“Kaya kita sinamahan, maraming maka [Candidate X]*

dito... sa labas puro [Candidate Y].” The enumerator and the crew then followed to film the respondent. This episode showed the purposive manner of selecting respondents, which introduced sampling bias, contributing even more to the non-representativeness of the sample.

Can surveys with respondents selected through purposive sampling be considered scientific?

It must be noted that purposive sampling is associated with qualitative forms of data gathering, such as ethnographic interviews, unlike surveys which fall under the domain of quantitative research.

While external validity can no longer be expected from *kalye surveys* that followed non-random sampling techniques, there will always be an expectation that surveys will follow the protocols for objectivity and adhere to the principles of measurement validity and reliability. Doing so will enable counting of recurrence, even if such accounting can only describe the members of the sample.

Then again, can surveys be designed and conducted just for fun, or as a survey enumerator would say, “*Katuwaan lang?*” There are certainly pop-surveys that abound. However, when the subject of surveys involves important matters of public interest, then its design, administration, analysis, and dissemination must be founded on much care and responsibility.

PRESCRIPTION 4

Count incidences to make sense of observations

To make sense of survey results, responses generated from an adequately-sized and randomly selected pool of respondents are counted. Given the random nature of respondent selection, statistical techniques are applied to assess whether the observed patterns from the adequately-sized and randomly drawn sample can be generalized to the target population.

Our review of *kalye survey* videos uncovered different styles of counting frequency of responses – e.g., some videos feature on-the-spot tallying of responses, some

include reporting of frequency distribution towards the end of the video, while some did not perform any form of aggregation at all. As some videos were edited or spliced, we are uncertain if all the responses have indeed been accounted for in the videos.

Analysis-wise, given the non-random nature of respondent selection, the data acquired from *kalye surveys* cannot be subjected to statistical techniques that can assess whether the voting patterns observed in the sample can be generalized to the target population. Then again, our review of *kalye survey* videos revealed the tendency of the title of the videos to frame the surveys as if they were representative of the voting population of the survey locale (e.g., “*Nagsalita na ang [Location]*”).

These videos also tend to adopt a sensationalized manner of phrasing the video title: “*Landslide sa [Location]*,” “*Kalye survey [part X] titindig ang balahibo mo sa survey na ito sino ang presidente ng [Location]*,” “*Kalye survey [part X] grabe napuno ang listahan sino kaya ang sinisigaw ng taga [Location]*.” We also observed at least one video with a title that claimed something, e.g., “*May tumabla kay [Candidate X]*,” even though the results presented in the video did not support this claim.

Apart from the title, the thumbnail description of the video sometimes also contains generalizations: “*Landslide sa [Location]*,” “*[Candidate X] Number 1 sa [Location]*.” There is also an instance when the survey enumerator’s opening spiel hinted at a representative survey: “*Aalamin natin sino ba ang sinisigaw ng mga taga [Location] para maging presidente sa susunod na halalan.*” This video is accompanied by a description that promotes its supposed representativeness: “*Ating pakinggan ang tinig ng ating mga kababayan mula sa [Location] kung sino ang gusto nilang maging susunod na Presidente ng Pilipinas.*”

We also noted several occasions when the survey enumerator offered generalizations of the result while the survey was still ongoing: “[Candidate X] talaga malakas pati sa [Location];”

“Landslide si [Candidate X]!” “Lamang po si [Candidate X] sa [Location];”
“Taumbayan nagsasalita, si [Candidate X] malakas, hindi po si [Candidate Y].”

Thus, survey literacy training can guide content creators on the value of properly reporting response patterns; otherwise, the reporting only leads to viewer misinformation. Survey literacy training should underscore to content creators that, even if results cannot be generalized to the population, all responses should be accounted for when reporting results, including the undecided and the non-response.

Moreover, emphasis must be placed on explaining to the content creators the analytical impact of the non-random manner by which they typically select their respondents. Fundamentally, a non-random sampling scheme can only deliver results that describe the non-random sample and not the larger population.

Hence, if the survey can only manage gathering data through non-random sampling, then the framing of the video title and the presentation of results should not mislead the viewers that the results represent the larger population.

In the third and last part of this series, we will be presenting instances where *kalye surveys* tend to deviate from the ethical standard of practice. We will also be offering two additional prescriptions that address these deviations in order to design, administer, analyze, and disseminate ethically-grounded surveys.

The ethics of 'kalye surveys'

By Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual, Anjenica U. Durana, and Myrnelle A. Cinco

Originally published on April 3, 2022 in [Rappler](#), Part 3 of 3

Apart from the standards that address scientific rigor, surveys must persistently follow ethical standards of practice across the entire phase of research. The ethical norms of surveys are moored on the general principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice.

PRESCRIPTION 5

Obtain informed consent

First and foremost, autonomy must be observed and protected by acquiring informed consent from respondents before conducting the survey.

Informed consent includes providing the respondents with sufficient information about the survey project, the group conducting the project, its funders, terms of survey participation (e.g., scope of response task; statement on beneficence and nonmaleficence, which articulates potential benefits and elimination of potential harm), and management of collected data (e.g., confidentiality, data privacy, data storage).

It should also contain the project's contact information and an agreement form on informed voluntary participation. These are all key to enable respondents to make informed decisions whether to participate in the survey project or not.

We observed from the videos that *kalye survey* enumerators tend to have a very casual and straightforward manner of approaching prospective respondents and getting them to participate by simply announcing that they are conducting a *kalye*

survey and then dropping the question on presidential vote choice. It is designed to be a “fast survey”, a quick ask-and-go method of data collection.

However, the principle of autonomy must always uphold the agency of respondents to make an informed decision on survey participation, even if the survey is designed to be quick. Thus, training content creators on the basic information needed to establish informed consent is necessary.

We likewise observed that most survey enumerators would show a board, which functions as a “show card” to present the list of candidates and, at the same time, as a recording device on which enumerators tally the responses. Designed like so, every succeeding respondent would then see the latest tally of votes. Thus, we heard respondents comment that, “*Ah malakas ang [Candidate X] ngayon;*” “*Parang si [Candidate X] ang mahina diyah;*” “*Maraming undecided.*” One respondent who noticed that the whiteboard marker was running out of ink even quipped, “*Ayaw nang sumulat, baka matalo.*”

In addition, in an effort to claim authenticity, an enumerator expressed, “*Ito ‘yung tunay na survey,*” as he showed the board with the current tally of votes to the camera.

The practice of using the board as a show card and a tally board does not only run contrary to the data privacy clause that is core to survey data collection, it also potentially creates a bandwagon effect (when respondents follow the vote of the majority) or underdog effect (when respondents opt to choose the minority) on succeeding respondents, which ultimately affects the validity and reliability of the survey results.

Moreover, the non-private manner of administering the survey can also undermine the independence of the respondents when they express their choice. There are occasions when the survey was administered to a congregation of individuals, and these individuals hear and can comment on the choices of the others. There is also

an instance where the enumerator just shouted his question to a crowd and they shouted their answers back.

This manner of survey administration can create groupthink effect among the respondents, and some respondents may express a choice that appears to be socially desirable among the other respondents in the group. We noted occasions when some respondents changed their vote choice after they heard or saw the answer of another respondent. As such, the collected data may reflect voting preference that some respondents did not independently make.

It is also quite concerning to observe how the reviewed *kalye surveys* appear to assume that the respondents consented to have their participation recorded on video, and worse, be later uploaded on YouTube. Ethical practice emphasizes that survey data collection should be treated as a private and confidential exercise. The act of video documenting the process and later on uploading it without express permission runs against the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and data privacy.

We observed instances when respondents would be visibly hesitant to participate (e.g., they would walk away from the camera, they would hide their faces) but the enumerator would still proceed with the survey and in filming them. These respondents would eventually relent but their hesitation to participate is still visible. One respondent expressed his agreement to participate but requested not to be filmed. The enumerator replied, “*Itatanong na lang. Hindi na kita i-video... ‘Yan narinig niyo na lang ah. Ayaw magpa-video eh.*” However, the uploaded video still displayed the respondent’s face, without even any effort of blurring it.

We also noted at least two occasions when respondents were surprised that they were being filmed. One respondent said, “*Naka-camera pala...baka pagalitan ako*

ah;” while another respondent, upon finding out that the survey will be uploaded on YouTube, commented, “*Baka mamaya ma-shoot-to-kill ako ah.*”

Some videos also inadvertently capture children’s faces and these were not blurred in the uploaded video. Minors are offered a greater degree of protection and data privacy. Acquiring informed consent for them to appear in a publicly released video must first be discussed with a parent or legal guardian. Lastly, we observed that the inside space of some houses were also inadvertently filmed without apparent prior informed consent.

Overall, while it appears to contribute to the *kalye survey*’s authenticity, the casual and unconsented means of video recording respondents is a violation of informed consent, confidentiality, and data privacy. Survey literacy training will teach content creators to be more mindful and respectful of these non-negotiable principles, regardless of whether they intend their surveys to be entertaining or not.

PRESCRIPTION 6

Honor respondents’ voluntary participation and voluntary non-participation

The ethical standard of justice means honoring the articulations in the informed consent form, respecting the decision of those who opted not to participate and those who decided to terminate their participation during the course of survey enumeration or project duration. It also means honoring the goodwill of survey respondents who volunteered their data.

Survey literacy training should highlight that surveys, as a tool that is highly dependent on informed voluntary participation, should always place a premium on the welfare of the respondents across the entire phase of the process.

Literacy training should also emphasize that the goal is not only to design and implement valid and reliable surveys but also to make the entire experience a pleasant and safe one for those who agreed to participate as respondents as well as for those who declined at the point of recruitment or those who decided to terminate their involvement during the actual course of the survey.

Way forward

We reiterate that surveys, if scientifically and ethically done, can validly and reliably contribute to our sense-making. While *kalye surveys* are generally packaged as an alternative to mainstream political polling, they are not excused from the standards expected from social science research methods given the agenda of their inquiry, the scope of their dissemination, and their potential to create actual voting effects. And while *kalye surveys* may be packaged as “for fun”, they are prone to cause misinformation if handled carelessly. Any survey, if improperly done, can generate misinformation.

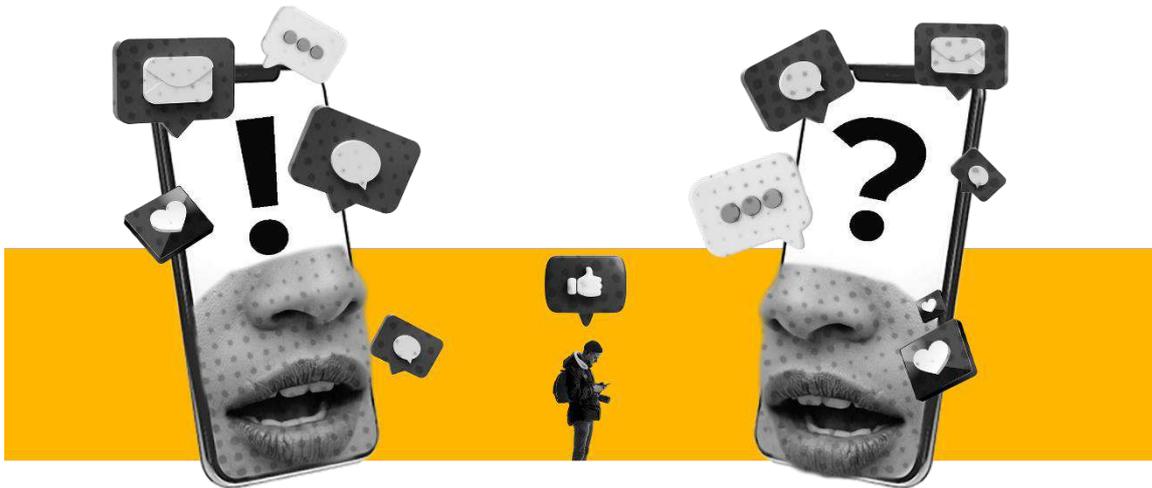
Our freedom of speech and expression allows anyone of us to conduct surveys. Thus, while our review surfaced areas where *kalye surveys* tend to deviate from the gold standard, we also argue that scientific and ethical prescriptions can be learned and incorporated in *kalye survey* practice. Thus, we advocate for survey literacy and our six basic prescriptions highlighted areas where training can help *kalye survey* content creators in advancing their understanding of the science and ethics of surveys and how these can be applied across the design, administration, analysis, and dissemination phases of the practice.

Similarly, our freedom of speech and expression allows every one of us to be informed by surveys. As such, our advocacy for survey literacy also extends to the members of the public who are the ultimate consumers of survey reports. Survey literacy should raise the public’s awareness of the science and ethics of surveys to allow them to sensibly interrogate and prudently utilize survey results.

Survey literacy should make the tools for evaluating the validity, reliability, and ethicality of surveys more accessible and easily understandable to enable the public to protect themselves from all possible forms of misinformation.



Most of all, survey literacy should empower the agency of the public so that they can demand accountability among survey groups that deliberately misuse surveys for misinformation.



DEPOLITICIZATION OF THE POLITICAL IN FACEBOOK GROUPS

By **Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo**, **Luisa C. Pineda**, and **Candice Marie V. Perez**
 Originally published on April 3, 2022 in [Rappler](#).

Noise does not mean participation

The high engagement of digital publics in political discourse seems to reflect healthy political participation. However, we see manifestations of depoliticization in political engagements in Facebook (FB) groups. This paper is an argument for the presence of depoliticization in what seems to be high-engagement political acts in FB groups. We list instances in FB groups where depoliticized participation is manifested through repulsion of further participation, inhibition of diverse opinions, and restraint in understanding how others view the world.

In the context of politically-motivated activities, FB in general has been perceived as a tool of democratization and FB groups as avenues to encourage, organize, and mobilize members to actively perform their civic duties such as joining causes, spreading awareness on pressing social issues, and providing discourses on various relevant topics. However, more recent studies show evidence of the emergence of using this facility to instigate harmful behaviors and actions such as partaking in exchanges of hate speech, disseminating disinformation, and proliferating extremist ideologies.

What is political?

We borrow scholar [Eugene F. Miller's](#) generic definition of “political” as both individual and collective activities happening in a “polis” or community composed of people who can deliberate and judge the civic body. This “community” or group of people need not be homogenous nor “united”. To participate, to lend one’s voice, to raise one’s hand, to manifest, to signify, to register, to oppose, to agree, to extend an argument, or to clarify, is to believe that such actions will improve our lives. Citizens do this not just for the mere purpose of finding happiness, “but to secure the conditions that permit each individual to pursue happiness as he[sic]/she understands it.”

Simply put, when citizens believe that participation works, then democracy can work. We, therefore, underscore the precondition of spaces that allow for processes to continue, especially the construction of opinions leading to certain actions. Regardless of the definite consequences of actions, opinion-making should remain a continuum.

What is ‘depoliticization’?

How can there be depoliticization in a political activity such as in the sharing of, commenting on, and posting of elections-related content? This is counter-intuitive if we think of it. Our analysis is an invitation to seeing an image that is not apparent but consequently moves people away from engagement.

According to researcher Guido Niccolò Barbi’s [study](#), depoliticization manifests when there is a lack of political choice and a deficiency of spaces for expressing varied styles of making a choice. The term was originally related to nation states’ over-delegation of decision-making to its bureaucracy.

We hear statements such as “market trends”, “international forces and structures”, or “force majeure” binding the hands of governments in urgency and thus delegating decision-making to the authority or to the elite few.

A [study](#) also says that depoliticization also reflects when the “political” is opposed to everyday, ordinary, of-the-streets politics and political opinion-making. When political space is progressively restricted in favor of what may appear as higher-order reasons such as rationality, logic, efficiency, nationalism, and solidarity, depoliticization occurs.

Although opinions are far less stable than factual truths, it is the primary element in any form of public sphere engagement. We gather together to converse, share ideas, question information, give corrections, remember stories, and share narratives in order for opinion-making to continue to take place. While truth sets the boundary to our democratic choice, once we avoid the choosing, politics disappears in favor of full submission to delegation.

Research design and method

Our team used a tool directly linked to the Facebook API that brought us a data corpus of 5,379 unique public Facebook group posts on elections-related topics covering the following time periods:



Using maximum variation sampling and intensity sampling to get our sample size for textual analysis, we first came up with 72 samples with 24 samples each quarter using a constructed week spread, two for each quarter.

We then reduced the sample size in Quarters 2 and 3 from 24 to 15 as these samples were more data-rich than those in Quarter 1 due to their proximity to the official campaign period. Our final sample size is 54.

A profile of the FB group samples can be divided into descriptions of the group names, the post, and the post's content. Crucial information gathered included the name of the FB group, the account description, or the group page's "About," section, if any, the number of members in the group, and the uploader/account owner.

Some FB group names were more obvious – bearing the name of the candidate the group vouches for (e.g., Solid Supporters [Person X]) or opposes (e.g., RESIGN [Person X]). Other FB group names had no explicit association to politics (e.g., Plantitas / Plantitos, [redacted] BUY and SELL).

As for posts, we traced the original source, oftentimes from another personal account or Facebook page, news organizations (e.g., News5), and official accounts of presidential candidates, as well as topics, level of engagement, general sentiment (i.e., positive or negative) in the original post, group post, and their respective reactions and discussions.

Keywords and actors mentioned, which came in the form of photos, memes, surveys, videos (live and recorded), and purely text posts, the number of photos/attachments in a post, as well as captions in the original post and FB group, were noted.

Another descriptive criterion was the directionality of the shared post, as some posts have been shared not only once, which we tagged as "first level" sharing, but twice or more, or "second level".

Manifestations of 'depoliticization'

Absolute truths that prohibit opinion-making

Captions and comments from FB group members often have a tone of impenetrable agreement with the posts shared. These expressions of assent often include strong affirmations of the singularity of choice – *only this leader, only this path*. This, even if the posts are not entirely about social issues or candidates' plans of action.

Instead, many of the posts are endorsements of the candidates' values and character showcasing strength, fortitude, and fairness as in the phrases "*pantay-pantay ang pagtrato sa lahat*", "*yan ang [Position X]*, direct to the point, fair and

just... he/she deserves to be the next President”, “[Person X] is a fighter”. Many posts also forward solidarity as a zero-sum game.

Expressions such as “[Person X] lamang ang karapat-dapat”, “Solid [Person X] lang naman kami”, and referring to candidates as “Next President [Person X]” also show finality of support. Solidarity is automatically generalized to all while dissent is easily relegated to be the other. FB group posts garner either one of these: a.) monotonicity of agreement; b.) tolerance of the posts’ presence; or c.) active unnoticed.

It is also evident in the sampled posts the assertion that the problems of the country are exacerbated by certain sectors’ dissent or by long-running societal issues which are already being addressed. A poster showing clenched fists overlapped with logos of party lists and organizations branded as dissenters, with red bold letters splashed across it, is shared and “seen”. There are also remarks from samples that show pronounced aversion to criticism against the government. Likewise, comments like this one that subscribe to an unobstructed continuation of leadership are also prevalent:

“Ang pabagu-bagong liderato ang problema...huwag nang palitan ang liderato, baguhin ang konstitusyon.”

(“The often changing leadership is the problem...let us not change the leadership. Change the Constitution.”)

These texts display depoliticization not as a lack of political activity but as a lack of respectful deliberation from an “absolutely correct” population.

The core of this type of depoliticization is derived not from the facticity of their claims-behind-opinions, but in the absence of space for the “other” in the political space. With absolutisms, prejudices or “...opinions that we did not form ourselves or which we have become [unable to revise](#)” creep in.

Data also reveal how depoliticization occurs when issues are stripped of their complexities. This

comes in the form of mocking others' inability to see the obviousness of matters. In these texts, complexity is not a preferred trait of solutions, systems, and leaders as they are synonymized with complicatedness. Hence, there is little room for the "third opinion" some people may bring into the discussion.

Simplistic binaries that do not expand deliberation

"Either or", "wrong or right", "good or bad" – these are some of the prescribed binaries that emerged from the data. These binaries manifest in the FB users' political preferences, whether for a particular candidate, political party or affiliation, or stances on topical socio-political issues. Captions also contain specific attributes of a political candidate such as:

"I support [Person X] in [another profession, redacted] but not in politics."

Another type of binary that surfaced is that of intellectual and moral superiority pitted against their opposites. The use of the words, "*magbasa*" (read) and "*tanga*" (stupid) further emphasize the distance between what the users regard as right or wrong behavior:

"Huwag maging tanga... Maging mulat. Huwag bumuto sa [redacted]."

("Do not be stupid... Be socially aware. Do not vote for [redacted].")

When only two alternatives are presented, people not content with either will not join or continue with the discussion. When one option can be *so wrong* while the other can be *very right*, then there is no use for further deliberation. It is a dead-end for both sides. Therefore, the noise and the presence of vigorous activity (e.g., high social media engagement) in this space do not account for those who have left and those who have chosen not to enter. In short, depoliticization is a force that does two things: a.) turns-off people from engagement and b.) encourages people's passivity even in the presence of political intensity.

Likewise, when people are grouped into moral and immoral or intelligent and stupid, people who may be in the process of moving between these two extremes, say, from being miseducated to getting educated, may not even have the chance to move at all.

Resignation to being “apolitical” as self-preservation

This particular manifestation of depoliticization is one that makes users leave after participation, because to “be political” could be too costly when health, peace, or friendships are at stake. FB group members are using less conventional means to cope with the current social climate and they too might be convincing many to do the same.

In one such FB group, a member shared a post on fictionalized representations of political candidates in the form of gameplay, with no semblance of political discussion. Animated characters of the presidentiables are shown battling it out in a wrestling ring – making a spectacle out of a different kind of visualization of the “competition.”

“Final na nga ba ang tambalang [Person X & Y]? Para masukat ang kanilang kakayanan, haharapin naman nila ang tambalang [Person Z & A] hindi sa eleksyon kundi sa loob ng wrestling ring! Masayang bakbakan na naman ito! Laughtrip na naman...”

“

(Is the tandem Person X & Y final? To gauge their capabilities, the two must face tandem Person Z & A, not during an election, but inside a wrestling ring! This is going to be an exciting fight! It’s going to be funny again...)”)

Embodied witnessing through technology as be-all end-all

A good number of posts also maximized the use of videos in varied forms. There are vlog-type videos where netizens with FB pages, some with a considerable number of followers, meticulously discuss an array of issues. There is an intentional tone of objectivity in these videos.

The act of recording an anecdotal account or the intention of speaking to the camera is already taken as objective truth amplified with disclosed caveats such as *“ito lang ang katotohanan dito”* (this is the only truth here), *“ito talaga kasi ang totoong nangyari dyan”* (this is what’s actually happening), or *“basta sa aking nakita, ito ang totoo...”* (from what I see, this is the truth...).

Likewise, there are shared videos that track a candidate attending to his/her public duties such as site inspection of an infrastructure project. The videos are raw (no cuts, no graphics or texts, no background music). Yet, the *witnessing* is a seamless calculated act – where to point the camera, how to frame the shots, where to start, and how to end the video.

These texts affirm how empowerment in witnessing is expanded by technology. Smartphones record what we see in front of us. Social media platforms appropriate media facilities only accessible to media giants a few years back. So where is depoliticization when witnessing is our primary access to truth? Depoliticization is present in spite of the obviousness of how an event ought to be seen favorably or unfavorably. Look how they messed up/Look how they did well.

When this act of witnessing has no context or no explanation via caption or in-video commentary, the viewer/reader is presented with a story in raw form. Posts without explainers/captions can easily be placed out of context when they land in the wrong hands.

On the other hand, when we disclose our context in video-recording or in uploading a shared post, we are offering the relationality of the content to our lives (My caption/comment is a form of disclosure of my being a teacher reacting to this shared post), thus, giving our opinions relative scope, not certitude.

Creation of atmythsphere

Depoliticization also surfaces when there is an exaggeration of account that levels with mythification or a narrative that is no longer *of this world* – either of the divine or of the underworld. Subsequently, participants may feel ostracized or doomed.

This version of depoliticization is also present in the magnification of representation that reaches a point of implausibility. When participants no longer bother to catch up or disprove the incredibleness of an account, depoliticization takes place.

To illustrate, one featured vlogger talks to the camera proclaiming in a prayer-like voice amplified by an echo sound effect:

“Nakakakilabot! [Person X] Tinakda ng Diyos sa 2022! [Person Y] Naging kasangkapan! [Person Z] aalalay kay [Person X]! mangyari ang dapat mangyari. Itakda ang dapat itakda. Huwag n’yo pong pahintulutan na magwagi muli ang kasamaan... Ang dami na talagang gising...”

(“This gives me goosebumps! Person X was anointed by God for 2022! He/she is an instrument! Person Z will help Person X! What is supposed to happen will happen. What is appointed will be appointed. Let us not allow the evil to triumph... There’s so many of us who were awakened...”)

Audience commodification as political legitimization

FB groups have also become a point of contact for transactions between buyers and sellers. Evident in these groups, whether they were initially advertised as a buy and sell group or not, are product postings for non-election-related and election-related posts.

Non-election-related market activities include existing advertisements or endorsements of political candidates. Some products posted online feature ‘presidentiables’ names and photos in their caption and photo content. Another more subtle form of promotion is in the form of online vlogs shared on FB, for instance, a food vlogger featuring a food spot one of the presidentiables would frequent with other well-known personalities. On the other hand, candidates’ merchandise sold by fans themselves market their goods in buy and sell FB groups.

Gamification has also become evident in another form of an online survey. In one post, four presidentiables’ photos were edited in a seemingly animated way, as in a gaming card, with bright, colorful text fonts and varied backgrounds.

Here we go back to our previous example of the fictional online wrestling game that features animated characters of select politicians and ‘presidentiables’ going against one another inside a wrestling ring, “for entertainment purposes only.” There is no louder and more energetic engagement than what is seen in these live-streamed animations. Even if there is not much engagement in FB groups where these are shared, the *seeding* of these images opens up for people this energetic world of representational political fighting.

Satire, pun, mockery, comicy, and, yes, violence rolled into equally multi-layered approximations of mediality stretched over several hours. One may argue, therefore, that entertainment always comes with politics. Are we not entitled to harmless play in this participation that can be a bit exhausting?

Depoliticizing in this context is in the allegory of fight focused on personalities. It further amplifies the destructive notion of personality-based politics we seem unable to transcend.

If democratic participants get sucked into the narrative of heroes and messiahs as the central drivers of democracy, then delegation of decision-making to personalities becomes more and more an unconscious reflex.

Inferences on FB groups as spaces for depoliticization

Although this paper's analysis of the peculiarities of groups in Facebook groups is preliminary reading, we have arrived at a list of spatial imagery we can use for gauging whether our FB groups are spaces for orchestrated manipulation in and outside them and expanding depoliticization.

Repository of prejudices

The space FB groups provide has the ambience of a repository of prejudices. Most typical in groups not originally political, posts registering depoliticizing content are allowed occupancy. Although this tolerance for prejudice may or may not align with group members' political stances, the pre-existing conviviality in a group may either result in complicity or acquiescence to accommodating prejudice permanently.

Service road

Like service roads that are designed to give access to farms, homes, villages, and towns while stretched along an expressway, FB groups are politics' entry-point to communities bound by professional, economic, and socio-cultural affinities. On one hand, they are important input channels through which political discussions and information can move. On the other hand, they provide space for orchestrated political manipulation that can be seeded given the looseness in relations in these groups.

If one argues that there may not be intentional manipulation from the outside, FB groups can still be passages where depoliticization can passively manifest and, therefore, be enabled. As seen in the data, these groups are not as vigorous as FB pages which are the usual origin of shared posts in FB groups, but they do serve as parallel routes for depoliticization.

Intersection

FB groups, like busy intersections, seem to reflect high engagement from many people coming from different directions, thus, they have the potential for robust political engagement. There is tolerance among members brushing one another's

shoulders as they accommodate the movement of others. It can also be surmised that this level of tolerance of different political stances is better than bigotry.

In spite of this, however, one's presence in intersections is preceded by a predetermined plan of direction. Again, the looseness of relationships matched with loose affinity allows for seeding political content that is not challenged. The data analyzed showed how in-group call-outs are rare while "seen" posts are most common.

Halfway house

Like halfway houses where people regain strength and perspective, FB groups do have the prospective to stir an active curiosity about other people's political stances, preferences, and analyses. To add, the commonality of professional, economic, and socio-cultural intentions that bring people together does give way for vulnerability and open-mindedness in such a contained digital space. Yet, they can muddle people's opinion-making process with anxiety, anger, or provocation. When the latter becomes more apparent given FB groups' unguarded climate, the halfway house for resources, recuperation, and relaxation becomes a halfway house for illicit recruitment and incitement.

Blighted community

The word "blighted" is associated with images of urban decay, graffiti, overgrowth, foreclosed properties, stray animals, abandoned vehicles, chipping paint off structures, etcetera, caused by unsustainable development. Blighted communities are once vibrant socio-cultural spaces that now have been left to atrophy. When depoliticization creeps in unchecked, FB groups do appear like these blighted communities where traces of vibrant discourse and productive transactions are archived with "seen zones" and frozen laugh emoji reactions. FB groups' data dump accommodation can replace a once-energetic space for the exchange of opinions.

Way forward

How do we protect ourselves?



Own our citizenship in digital spaces that we consent to participate in



Be aware of the red flags



Speak up against irregularities and know when to leave

Own our citizenship in digital spaces that we consent to participate in

By clicking the join button, it is expected that we have scrutinized what these groups are and the set of rules and policies they have in place. Responsible participation requires keeping these community standards properly observed.

Be aware of the red flags

We must actively monitor and be critical of the posts that are unrelated to what the group is about, irrelevant to the members of the community, and seem to penetrate into our shared space, subtly or undisguised, with ideas that incite depoliticized engagement.

Speak up against irregularities and know when to leave

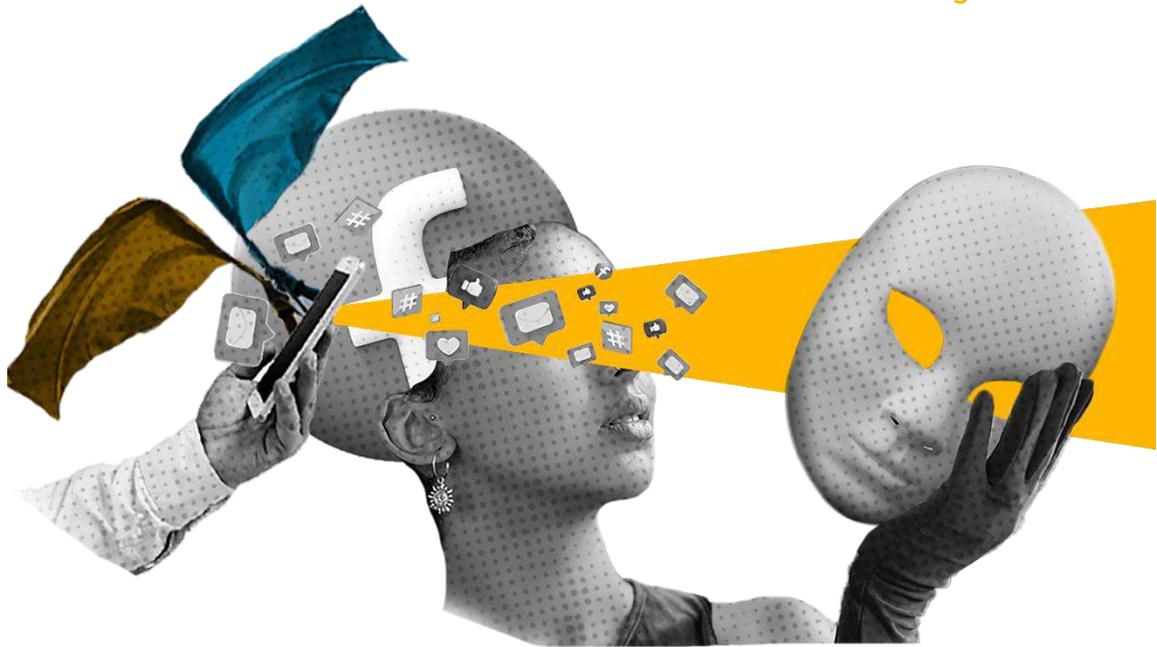
Flag posts, respectfully call the attention of sharers and commenters, bring up concerns to group administrators. We must do our share as members; *however*, if the environment is already affecting us more than we can handle, taking a break from or totally leaving the group may just be the better option. We can always choose to engage in politics in some other groups.

So how do we engage?

Let us provide space for compassion in our political interactions, and compassion for the other who is not the *other*, but the other who is *kapwa*. When we regain confidence in the process of understanding societal problems, we withhold this convenient act of othering. With our politics of anxiety revolving around moral panics, we do not just other the *other*, we quickly go to the extreme side of solutions when one thing does not seem to work.

Depoliticization is politics of anxiety at its core. It is an inability to see *process* as a movement *through* things – interpretations, points of view, and analyses moving *through* and among us, *through* conversations still unfolding, not a jump nor a cop-out skip from one end to the other. The latter is a knee-jerk reaction, not a compassionate response. When there is moral panic around issues like the drug war or reproductive choice, stakes are high, but alternatives should not be bound by binaries and absolutisms. Attitudes should also be contextualized into “*for now, given the information we have and what we have learned so far, this is how we respond*”, as opposed to “*this is the best way to respond for all time*”.

To end, our textual analysis is a case for caution of depoliticization in the political when the political is marred with absolutism, binaries, audience commodification, sloppy witnessing, mythification, and flight. The counterintuitiveness of depoliticized engagement makes it pass by us unchecked. Under our noses and in spaces we give our consent to sharing with others, there is a movement that happens: people receding into silence and giving up their space.



CLOAKED POLITICS:

THE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF NON-POLITICAL FACEBOOK PAGES IN THE 2022 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Jon Benedik Bunquin, Myrnelle A. Cinco, and Julienne M. Urrea

Originally published on April 3, 2022 in [Rappler](#).

Extant studies have documented and analyzed the use of Facebook pages during elections in the Philippines and abroad. Citing data from Facebook’s Ad Library, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism shows that candidates for the May 2022 Philippine General Elections are spending on Facebook advertising. Williams and Gulati’s (2013) study characterized the use of Facebook for political campaigns during the 2006 and 2008 US polls. In a comparative analysis of 18 election campaigns, Ceccobelli (2018) examined how political leaders in advanced industrial democracies maximize the platform to “personalize” their political communication.

This is consistent with Bajar’s (2017) findings that the most dominant themes found on the Facebook pages of presidential candidates during the 2016 Philippine General Elections were political advertisements and self-descriptions.

But aside from posts from official campaign pages, election-related content circulating on Facebook are also generated by pages owned by supporters (Woolley, et. al, 2010) and news organizations reporting about politics (Beam, et. al, 2018; Glowacki, et. al, 2018; Narayanan, et. al, 2019). Non-partisan Facebook pages are also found to be active participants in political discourses during elections. Goodwin, et. al (2020) documented how political organizations were

employing the services of coordinated networks of social media influencers for political campaigns during the 2020 US polls. In the report released by University of Texas' Center for Media Engagement, experts and political strategists admitted to the practice of leveraging the “authenticity” of nano-celebrities on social media who are capable of cascading political messages to hyper-specific audiences.

The ethics of using non-partisan Facebook pages for election campaigns, whether paid for or otherwise, remains to be subject for debate as some political strategists would claim that the practice is merely tantamount to “digital door-knocking” and is no different from how celebrities are canvassing for votes in favor of candidates they support.

However, Goodwin, et. al (2020) also observed that the “scale of reach, the influencers’ relationship with their audience, and disclosure and transparency” make such political strategy deceptive and akin to digital astroturfing – a coordinated inauthentic behavior of social media accounts that “creates the false impression that a campaign has developed organically” (Leiser, 2018).

In the Philippines, obfuscated Facebook pages created by “second-level subcontractors” who are part of a hierarchy of networked “disinformation architects” favored President Rodrigo Duterte’s bid during the 2016 Philippine General Elections (Ong & Cabañes, 2018). The study drew an important distinction between celebrities and pundits actively and openly influencing political opinions and anonymous micro-influencers involved in “more clandestine political operations.”

What is clear from these findings is the strategic use of Facebook pages in reaching audiences for political communication and how campaigning has expanded from traditional sources of political messages such as the media, to emerging political intermediaries, such as online nano-influencers.

Our paper provides evidence that political campaigning in contemporary media does not just end with political influencers and nano-celebrities – actors have penetrated non-political spaces, and seemingly non-partisan pages, with their reach and ability to cascade political content to diverse audiences, are serving as venues for strategic political communication.

At the same time, we also demonstrate how non-political pages are activated to be part of disinformation campaigns and validate the involvement of obfuscated non-political Facebook pages in online discourses surrounding the 2022 Philippine Elections. We also argue how their seemingly neutral interface serves as conducive channels for coordinated sharing of election-related propaganda and disinformation reaching millions of otherwise disinterested and non-partisan audiences.

Methodology

Data Collection

Our corpus was extracted from a dataset of 2,162,463 Facebook posts that contained election-related keywords, which included names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, political parties, election hashtags, and other election words published from May 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022. The data was scraped using CrowdTangle, a social media listening tool developed by Meta, the technology conglomerate that serves as the parent organization of Facebook.

Corpus extraction went through multiple layers of filtering prior to analysis (Table 1). First, we extracted posts published by Facebook pages with Philippine-based administrators. Second, since we are primarily interested in posts that came from pages traditionally conceived and appear as neutral about election matters, we used page categories as another filtering criteria.

To reduce the number of pages that only incidentally mentioned the keywords that we used in the initial scraping, we selected posts from high-volume categories (i.e., categories that contained a lot of posts). We used a cut-off number of 194 posts, which was calculated as the minimum outlier⁷ value in the upper bound of our dataset.

From a set of 537 categories, we were then left with 96 categories, with posts ranging from 200 to 60,749. In the third layer of filtering, we manually labeled each category as either *political* or *non-political*. *Political* categories are those that are directly linked to electoral and political matters (e.g., POLITICIAN), including those that share election updates (e.g., MEDIA_NEWS_COMPANY), information about policy and governance (GOVERNMENT_ORGANIZATION), campaign-related materials (ADVERTISING_MARKETING), advocacy messages (NGO), and other related matters. This label also included categories of individual content creators or personalities (e.g., PERSON, BLOGGER, and ARTIST), who share content related to the elections in their pages.

Meanwhile, categories labeled as *non-political* are those known to contain pages about special interest topics (e.g., CLOTHING, TRAVEL_SITE, HEALTH_BEAUTY), entertainment (e.g., TOPIC_JUST_FOR_FUN, SONG), and other categories for niche audiences (e.g., COLLECTIBLES_STORE, SOCIAL_CLUB). Posts labeled under this set of categories were included in the next stage of filtering.

Finally, to ensure that the corpus is made up of pages that appear to be non-political, we removed pages that contained election-related keywords in their page name and page description, or fields that are immediately visible to Facebook audiences. For example, if the description of a page contained the word “election”, it was removed from the corpus.

⁷ We used interquartile range in identifying outliers, since our data has many extreme values.

Table 1. *Post distribution per layer of filtering*

LAYER		NO. OF POSTS
0	Dataset	2,162,463
1	Extraction of posts from pages	664,608
	Extraction of page posts from PH	547,890
2	Extraction of PH page posts from high volume categories	538,422
3	Extraction of PH page posts from categories tagged as nonelection-related	79,546
4	Extraction of PH page posts from nonelection-related categories that do not contain election-related keywords in their names and descriptions.	40,556
Final corpus		40,556

Data Analysis

We used descriptive statistics to examine distributions of content per category and reveal posting patterns of non-political pages. We also extracted subsets of data that share content from official and unofficial pages of top presidential candidates and summarized relevant metrics using Python and Pandas, which can process large volumes of data. Topic modeling using latent derelict allocation (LDA) was also performed to provide a top-line understanding of the content being shared by these pages.

Results and Discussion

Non-political pages in the 2022 Philippine General election discourse

Out of the 96 high-volume page categories posting about the 2022 Philippine General Elections, 65 categories are labeled as *political* while 31 categories are labeled as *non-political*. The top 20 page categories based on the number of posts are shown in Table 2.

In general, the top number of posts engaged in election-related conversations come from categories where political and partisan content are expected to originate, such as Facebook pages of celebrities and influential individuals (e.g. 'PERSON'), media organizations (e.g. 'NEWS_SITE', and 'MEDIA_NEWS-COMPANY') and political/advocacy groups (e.g. COMMUNITY_ORGANIZATION, NON_PROFIT).

Table 2. *Top page categories in the dataset in terms of post volume*

RANK	FACEBOOK PAGE CATEGORY	NO. OF POSTS
1	PERSON	60,749
2	NEWS_SITE	54,736
3	MEDIA_NEWS_COMPANY	51,396
4	ACTIVITY_GENERAL	48,876
5	COMMUNITY	44,632
6	PERSONAL_BLOG	37,255
7	BROADCASTING_MEDIA_PRODUCTION	24,047
8	RADIO_STATION	22,218
9	COMMUNITY_ORGANIZATION	12,458
10	NON_PROFIT	11,169

Our research is primarily interested in the involvement of non-political pages in 2022 Philippine election discourse (Table 3). "ACTIVITY_GENERAL" was the top category under *non-political* and appears to be a catch-all for interest-based pages that may include official and fan-made pages of celebrities, meme pages, and brand pages.

Other non-political page categories include interest-based pages relating to entertainment which have noticeably fewer, yet still sizable amounts of posts. Similar to pages categorized as political, there is no strict adherence to the categories in terms of the actual identity and content of the pages, and identities and ownership of some pages are unclear.

Table 3. *Top non-political page categories in the dataset in terms of post volume*

RANK	FACEBOOK PAGE CATEGORY	NO. OF POSTS
1	ACTIVITY_GENERAL	48,876
2	LOCAL	5,177
3	GAMING_VIDEO_CREATOR	3,687
4	ENTERTAINMENT_SITE	3,193
5	COMMUNITY_SERVICES	2,695
6	TOPIC_JUST_FOR_FUN	2,624
7	COMMUNITY_CENTER	1,902
8	MEDICAL_HEALTH	1,678
9	WEBSITE	1,451
10	TOPIC_ARTS_ENTERTAINMENT	1,268

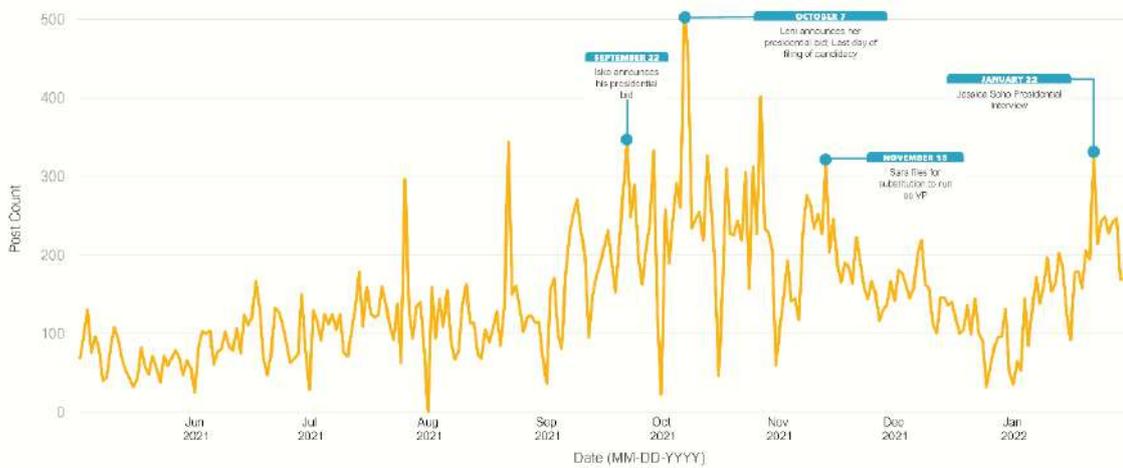
The declared page categories, page name, and page description of pages included in the analysis make it appear that they are primarily disinterested and unrelated to the elections. However, their posting activity indicates otherwise. Despite being non-political pages, we observed that post volume ramped up as the election season drew closer. From May, posting activity steadily increased and peaked during the month of official filing of candidacy in October (Figure 1).

Peaks in the day-to-day posting activity of these non-political pages were also observed during news events centering on elections, mainly during announcements of candidacy (Figure 1).

This is evident during October 7, the day before the deadline of official filing of candidacy and Leni Robredo's announcement of her presidential bid, the uptick in posting during September 22 when Isko Moreno announced his intention to run for president, and on November 13, when Sara Duterte officially ran as Vice President via substitution.

There was also a surge in posting activity during Jessica Soho's presidential interview. In general, peaks were observed during election-related events, providing evidence that non-political pages, despite their seemingly non-partisan appearance, are participating in election-related discourse.

Figure 1. Daily post count with annotated peaks



Non-political pages and their political sources and content

The volume of posts made by non-political pages during political events is indicative of their political activity. However, this is not just limited to posting about politics – non-political pages are also sharing partisan content in their timelines.

Looking at the top sources of content shared by non-political pages (Table 4), official presidential candidate pages (e.g., iskomorenodomagoso) and support pages (e.g., teamlenirobredo) were part of the top sources of content shared by non-political pages, alongside pages of mainstream media organizations (e.g., abscbnNEWS), prominent Philippine shopping malls (smsupermalls), and the public information office of the Philippine National Police (pnp.pio).

The official page of incumbent Manila Mayor Isko Moreno took the highest spot among presidential candidates as the most shared source of political content by non-political pages. His page is followed by the official pages of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., Vice President Leni Robredo, Senator Manny Pacquiao, and Senator Panfilo Lacson, respectively.

Unlike news media and shopping mall pages, candidate pages are made primarily for political

reasons, containing partisan materials that explicitly support and advocate for the candidates they represent, especially during election season.

Non-political pages engage in the amplification of messages by political candidates, and audiences of these pages, who may have initially liked these pages for reasons unrelated to politics, become captive of campaign materials they cascade.

Table 4. *Top sources of political content shared by nonelection-related pages*

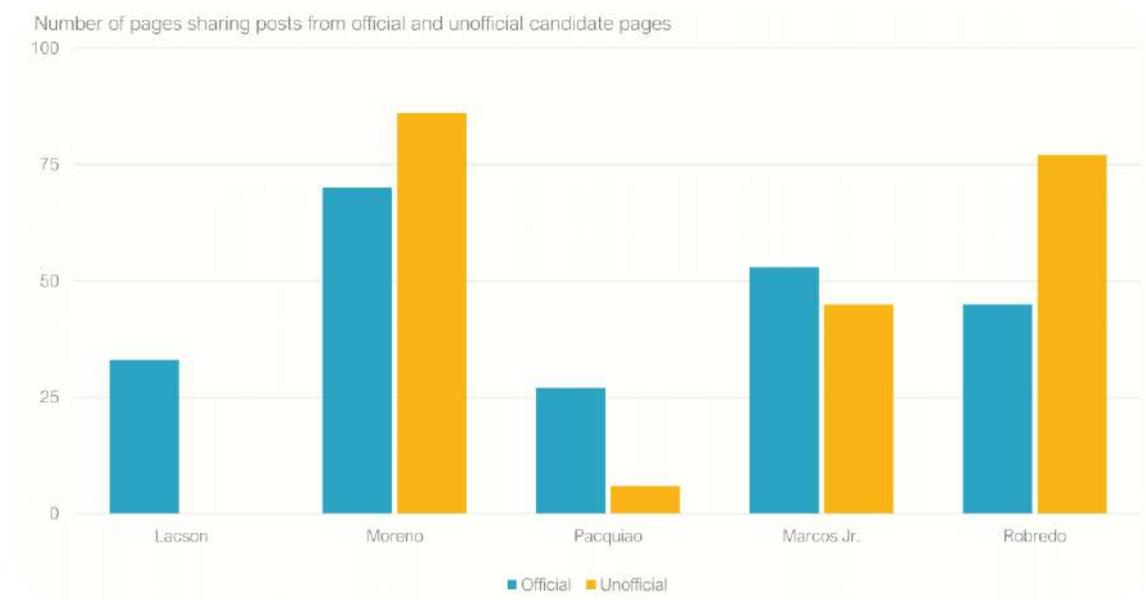
RANK	FACEBOOK USER NAME	NO. OF PAGES	RANK	FACEBOOK USER NAME	NO. OF PAGES
1	abscbnNEWS	144	11	SMNINews	52
2	News5Everywhere	129	12	smsupermall	47
3	PhilippineSTAR	112	13	BongbongMarcos	46
4	rapplerdotcom	85	14	VPLeniRobredoPH	43
5	gmanews	80	15	RMallsLingkodPinoyCenter	39
6	inquirerdotnet	71	16	philstarnews	38
7	iskomorenodomagoso	70	17	bangonbayani	33
8	manilabulletin	65	18	MannyPacquiaoPublicInformation	33
9	CNNPhilippines	55	19	PingLacsonOfficial	33
10	teamleniobredo	53	20	pnp.pio	30

Political actors can take advantage of the large audience base of non-political pages. Since these pages are packaged for special interest groups and topics, they can reach diverse audience segments and influence political fence-sitters. This is in contrast to the followers of political pages, who are more likely to have already formed their political opinion. In other words, non-political pages serve as venues for strategic political communication.

Our calculations show that non-political pages had an average of 238,154 followers, reaching a peak of 16,914,920. Looking at the pages sharing content

from official and unofficial⁸ pages of candidates (Figure 2), our findings indicate that there are more pages sharing content from Isko Moreno pages, followed by Robredo- and Marcos-related pages. It is also noticeable that there are no pages sharing content from unofficial pages related to Lacson.

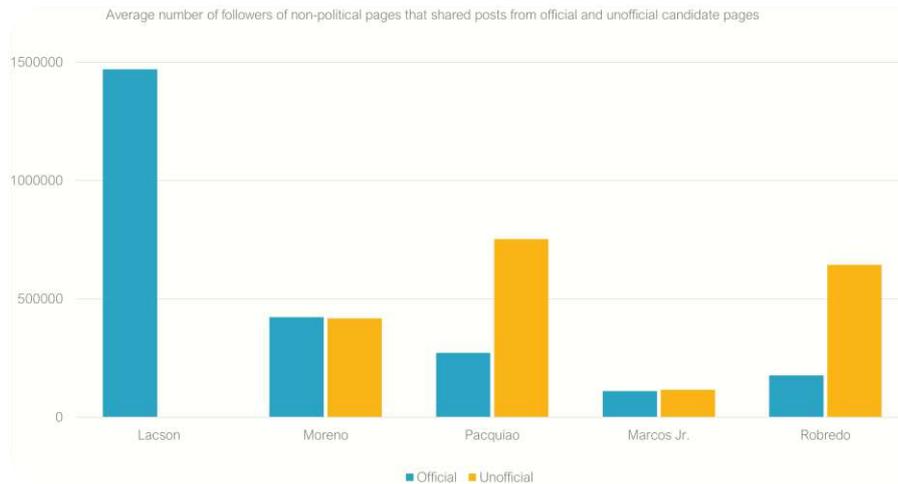
Figure 2. *Number of non-political pages sharing posts from official and unofficial candidate pages*



Although there are no pages sharing content from unofficial Lacson Facebook pages, it appears that pages that share content from the official Lacson page have the highest average number of followers, indicating the potential reach of his official page posts as they get shared by non-political pages. As shown in Figure 3, the average number of followers of the pages that share Lacson’s official content on Facebook towers over the other candidates.

⁸ We selected non-official pages that contained the name of the presidential candidates in their page names

Figure 3. *Average number of followers of non-political pages sharing posts from official and unofficial candidate pages*



When it comes to posts, interactions averaged at 2,025, with one post even scoring 903,717. These numbers tell us of the activity of non-political page followers, which can be engaged to gain more visibility on the platform.

Overall, there are more posts shared from unofficial candidate pages than their official pages (except for Pacquiao). Among the top presidential candidates, Robredo had the most number of posts from her official and unofficial pages shared by non-political pages, followed by Moreno (Figure 4).

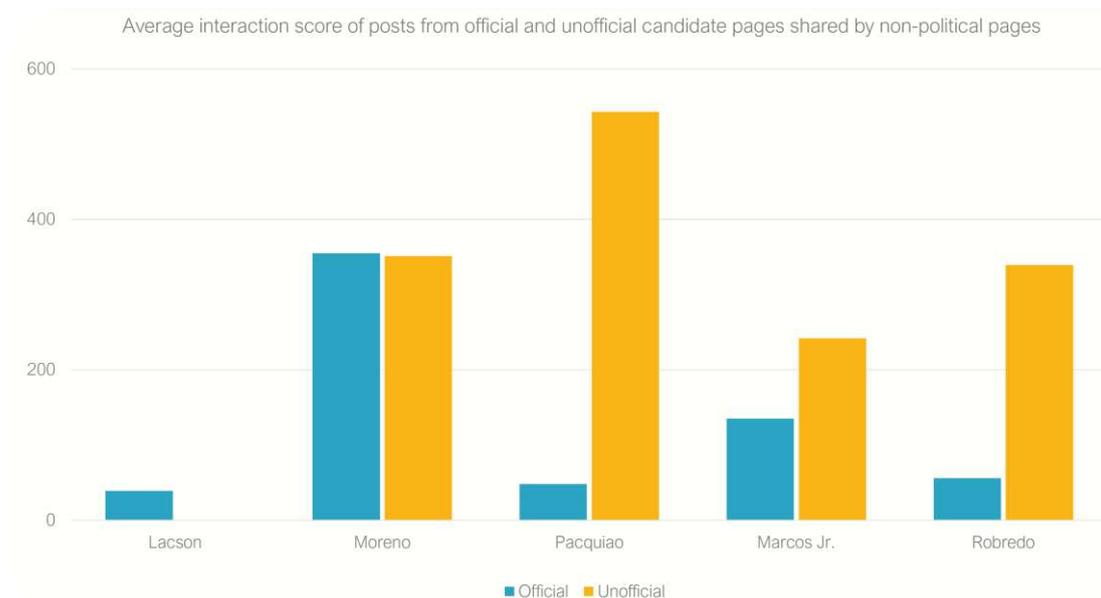
Figure 4. *Number of posts from official and unofficial candidate pages shared by non-political pages*



In terms of interaction, posts shared from Pacquiao’s unofficial pages garnered the biggest average interaction score, towering over other candidates. Noticeable in

the graph (Figure 5), however, is the low average interaction scores garnered by Lacson, even though some of the largest non-political pages are sharing content from his page.

Figure 5. Average interaction score of posts from official and unofficial candidate pages shared by nonelection-related pages



The findings above are indicative of the reach and engagement present in non-political pages as they share content from partisan sources – from official candidate pages to campaign support pages and other unofficial candidate pages.

It is also interesting to note that non-political pages shared more content from unofficial candidate pages. Compared to official candidate pages, content from these sources can be more affective and emotion-driven, and tend to have stronger partisan framing of political agendas in their support for a candidate.

To get a top-line understanding of the political topics shared by these non-political pages from different sources, topic models were generated. Upon examination of the keywords, we found that the topics can be clustered into four groups (Table 5). The first topic group (11.55% of the corpus) contains keywords related to *election policies and updates*, and it can be inferred that posts under these topics were related to election policies and voter registration guidelines shared by government institutions (e.g., COMELEC, PNP) and their partners (e.g., SM Supermalls).

The second topic group, which is the most dominant in the corpus (47.73%) contains topics with keywords related to *political news from professional media* (e.g., ABS-CBN News, Manila Bulletin), which can be understood as posts that share news articles about the elections and political candidates, evident in the co-occurrence of political candidate names and the word ‘news’.

The third topic group (14.58% of the corpus) contains topics with keywords about *election issues and events* such as interviews and cases.

The fourth group, which is second most dominant in the corpus (26.15%) contains topics containing the keywords specific to *political candidates*.

Topic groups 1 and 2 may have emerged as non-political pages disseminated election-related information, but topic groups 3 and 4 can be a result of non-political pages engaging in partisan behaviors online, given the topics and keywords clustered under them.

Table 5. *Topic groups and keywords per topic*

TOPIC GROUP	TOPIC NO. ⁹	KEYWORDS	PERCENTAGE
1. Election policies and updates (11.55%)	5	registration, vote, election, city, september, mall, robinson, day, mp, national	6.44%
	10	election, january, police, national, local, resolution, ban, pnpkakangpimo, pnp, rowena	5.11%
2. Political news from professional media (47.73%)	2	news, page, pm, like, interview, twitter, fact, share, gma, check	5.85%
	3	marcos, bbm, bongbong, duterte, sara, news, pilipinas, presidente, presidential, noong	18.78%
	6	president, duterte, robredo, one, presidential, vice, news, philippine, leni, marcos	23.10%
3. Election issues and events (14.58%)	1	pacquiao, manny, lacson, leny, ping, boy, robredo, abunda, live	6.24%
	7	comelec, voter, tax, guanzon, commissioner, commission, case, jan, division, hearing	1.12%
	11	marcos, people, law, year, philippine, bbm, filipino, drug, never	7.22%
4. Political candidates (26.15%)	0	leni, robredo, vp, pilipino, mb, bansa, ma, bayan, vice, buhay	12.03%
	4	mayor, isko, moreno, manila, city, domagoso, davao, guzman, aksyon, presidential	5.96%
	8	ong, willie, atienza, lito, niyo, ayoko, red, dq, doc, iboboto	3.87%
	9	bong, go, checkpoint, health, senator, antipolo, center, mahayag, ngayong, tulong	4.29%

⁹Numbering based on topic outputs generated through latent derelict allocation in Python

Non-political pages, political propaganda, and disinformation

While it is difficult to fully operationalize the tracking of propaganda and disinformation in social media, a good indicator of it is ‘Coordinated Inauthentic behavior’. Facebook’s Nathaniel Gleicher defines this as a phenomenon wherein ‘groups of pages or people work together to mislead others about who they are or what they are doing’ (Gleicher, 2018). One of the methods to identify coordinated inauthentic behavior is through ‘coordinated link sharing behavior,’ or when multiple Facebook pages repeatedly share the same posts in an ‘unusual short period of time’ (Giglietto et al., 2020).

We identified 61 pages engaging in this behavior sharing 634 unique links. Most of the links are shared from pages with non-candidate-related keywords.

However, those that are candidate-related emanated from Lacson-related pages or Pacquiao-related pages (Table 6). Interestingly, while having the most shares, Lacson-related pages shared only 7 unique links across 28 unique pages multiple times. Conversely, Manny Pacquiao-related pages had 100 unique links shared only across 9 unique pages. Upon inspection, these identified coordinated pages pose as entertainment pages sharing relatable quotes about life, romance, and heartbreak.

Table 6. *Shared links per post source*

SHARED POST SOURCE	TOTAL NUMBER OF SHARED LINKS	UNIQUE LINKS	UNIQUE COORDINATED ENTITIES
Others (No candidate-related keyword in source name)	2,177	466	61
Lacson-related pages	174	7	28
Pacquiao-related pages	102	93	7
Marcos-related pages	42	42	2
Moreno-related pages	33	24	9
Robredo-related pages	20	2	20

To deep dive on coordinated link sharing behavior, we looked into simultaneous posting of content among pages. By determining timepoints with the highest instance of simultaneous posting down to the seconds-level, we were able to reveal indicators of inauthentic behavior from non-political pages. To illustrate, we found 51 posts from different non-political pages posting the same content at exactly 11:42:56 on September 29, 2021. Shown in Table 7 are 10 timestamps with the highest volume of simultaneously uploaded posts.

Upon inspection, we found the same set of posts being uploaded by different non-political pages, all of which contain support for Lacson. Similar to the identified coordinated pages mentioned above, these pages masquerade as accounts that share content related to mental health, wellness, romance, heartbreak, motivation, and self-help but display inauthentic posting behavior related to politics and the elections

Table 7. *Posting timestamps and number of simultaneously uploaded posts*

SHARED POST SOURCE	TOTAL NUMBER OF SHARED LINKS
Post Created Time	No. of Posts
2021-09-29 11:42:56 PST	51
2021-10-30 14:09:11 PST	27
2021-10-13 09:21:43 PST	27
2021-10-21 14:10:06 PST	27
2021-10-05 09:35:18 PST	27
2021-10-27 11:17:11 PST	26
2021-09-18 16:41:35 PST	26
2021-10-28 11:20:24 PST	25

Aside from coordinated inauthentic behavior, we found evidence of disguised propaganda when we examined page names and corresponding usernames. To reiterate, our dataset is composed of pages with page names and page descriptions that appear non-political, i.e., their names did not contain any word or phrase that are related to politics or to the 2022 presidential elections.

However, we found that pages whose page names appear neutral or interest-based (e.g., gaming and music), but with Facebook usernames revealing their hyper-partisan identities. In particular, we found a number of posts from pages with usernames containing the words “Duterte” and “Marcos” to be sharing content from official and unofficial pages of Marcos Jr., while disguised as gaming and music pages.

Malicious actors take advantage of the “limited identity cues” (Donath, 1998, as cited in Farkas & Neumayer, 2019) in digital media environments to manipulate audiences. In the case of cloaked political pages, manipulation is done as political pages take on non-political identities to reach unsuspecting audiences, distribute political content, and amplify political agendas. Not only are the sources of these pages unknown and hidden, but they also impersonate non-political identities to build connections with non-political audiences.

Conclusion and recommendations

Our report has provided evidence to the role of non-political pages in the 2022 Philippine presidential election discourse on Facebook. In particular, we found non-political pages actively engaging in political activity and election-related conversations based on their posting behavior in the run-up to the elections.

Our study has also presented how non-political pages are not just engaged in activities beyond those that can be considered as politically neutral (such as sharing election information-dissemination); they actively engage in online partisan behaviors by sharing content from partisan sources, and participating in partisan discourses online.

Finally, we have shown evidence that non-political pages can be used for disinformation through the obfuscation of their actual, partisan identities, and coordinated posting behaviors.

Given the role and influence of non-political pages in the election discourse, we offer the following insights for media, platforms, civil society, and voters:

Anonymity with accountability

The 'limited identity cues' present in social media platforms allow users to remain anonymous as they engage in discourse online. Anonymity affords individuals the freedom to engage in democratic discourse as it allows them to reveal their true beliefs without fear of isolation or social pressure. However, it also allows users to engage in deceitful behaviors due to lack of accountability (Asenbaum, 2018). Anonymity thus becomes an abusive user's license to engage in malicious behaviors.

On Facebook, pages engaging in abusive and malicious behaviors can be taken down, but they can freely reemerge without any real consequences. The anonymous page administrators remain obfuscated and able to create more cloaked pages. Platforms must thus reconsider how to hold

users accountable for any abusive action online, without removing the affordance of anonymity that enables others to freely and creatively engage in democratic discourse.

Investigating disinformation outside of the traditional information sources

Aside from looking into news or news-like genres, we recommend fact-checkers, media, and researchers of disinformation to investigate spaces that appear neutral or non-political, especially since these pages are able to reach audiences that are not primarily interested in politics or engaged in political discourses. As shown in our research, coordinated, inauthentic behavior, and disguised propaganda are also enacted by pages that appear to be non-political. Platforms that have non-political content genres such as YouTube can be examined to see how disguised propaganda operates in these spaces.

Increasing discernment and criticality of our personal information environments

What appears to be non-political online may actually be venues where political propaganda is distributed and amplified. Digital literacy and voter education programs can be enhanced by highlighting how seemingly non-political pages can also be used to spread disinformation and manipulate audiences. Evidently, this issue is rooted in and can be addressed by larger institutions, but by constantly retooling current media literacy programs with the emerging practices of disinformation in social media, users can become more critical as they engage with different actors in the platform.



THE RISE OF META-PARTISAN 'NEWS' ECOSYSTEMS ON YOUTUBE

By Fatima Gaw, Ira Y. Cruz, and Luisa C. Pineda

Originally published on April 19, 2022 in [Rappler](#)

In the post-truth era, news matters more than ever. But what counts as “news” has become a contentious subject.

Scholars from [Journalism Studies](#) and [Online Participatory Journalism](#) have examined the changing news production conventions in online news, emphasizing their departure from traditional news values and adoption of participatory journalism. As political polarization intensifies globally, [hyperpartisan news](#) normalizes extreme political bias and transgressive reporting styles in media institutions.

“[Fake news](#)” as a popular form of disinformation also invokes the genre to propagate false, fabricated or manipulative information in the “look and feel of real news.” These developments shape audiences’ preconceived notions of “newsness” and consequently, the role of news media in discourse and democracy.

The precarity of the news genre is exacerbated by the “secondary gatekeeping” of [users, platforms, and algorithms](#). This confluence of human-machine interactions determines what news stories reach which audiences, appear in a particular

position in the feed, and are recommended with other content, thereby affecting the visibility, circulation, and impact of news on public life.

In this paper, we investigate a distinct breed of “news” that infuses online news genres, hyperpartisanship, and disinformation on YouTube during the 2022 Philippine Elections. We examine how the YouTube channels that produce this kind of “news” function to overexpose audiences to partisan content through a mass, coordinated network fortified by the platform’s recommendation system.

In other words, these YouTube channels make “news” about themselves – their politicians, their political agenda, and their political schemes – until they create a coherent political reality that can both withstand and co-exist with mainstream news media.

Methodology

From an initial corpus of over 20,000 videos from May 2021 to February 2022 which contained or are related to election keywords, we filtered the channels and videos based on the recurring presence of keywords such as “news,” “balita”, or similar expressions, excluding those that are considered mainstream news outlets (e.g., ABS-CBN, CNN Philippines).

We used social network analysis to map the identified “news” channels with the rest of the channels in the 2022 YouTube Election recommendation network. Through the network visualization tool Gephi, we performed cluster analysis and determined the communities to which these news channels belong.

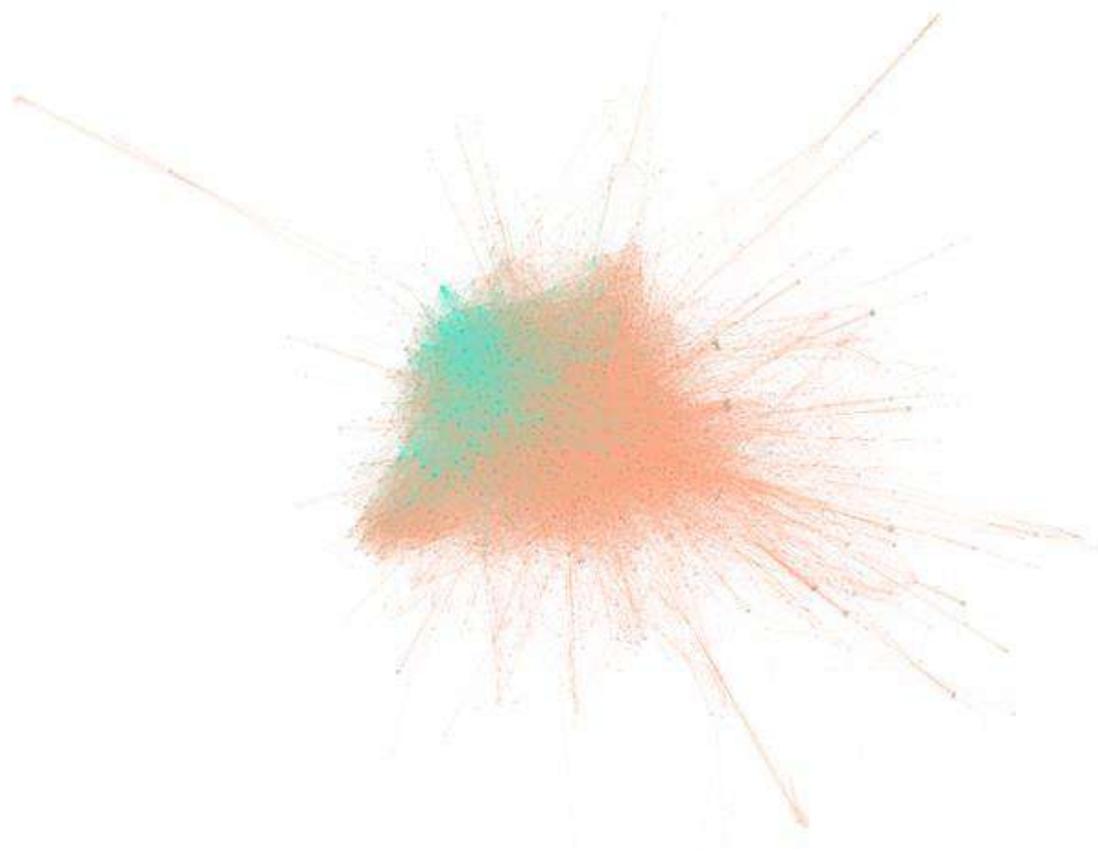
We also performed discourse analysis to understand not only the content but also the social contexts wherein they reside. We sampled the top 24 videos of recurring channels, and we examined the presence of news values (e.g., eliteness, impact, superlativeness) and employment of news styles (i.e., discursive, substantive, audio-visual, and textual styles) in the videos. Then, we analyzed how the news elements shape the manipulative discourses embedded in the content, with a focus on fabricated information, biased framing, change of focus, polarized ideologies, and platform manipulation.

Network of news “fronts”

We identified 124 out of 3453 channels that employ news elements in their video titles. When mapped into the 2022 Elections network, Figure 1 illustrates that these channels (teal) are prominently positioned and densely connected to one another even if they comprise only 4% of the network.

This indicates the high “relatedness” in their topics, formats, and audiences, as determined by the YouTube recommendation system. It also means that they are most likely recommended next to each other, forming the backbone of the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem.

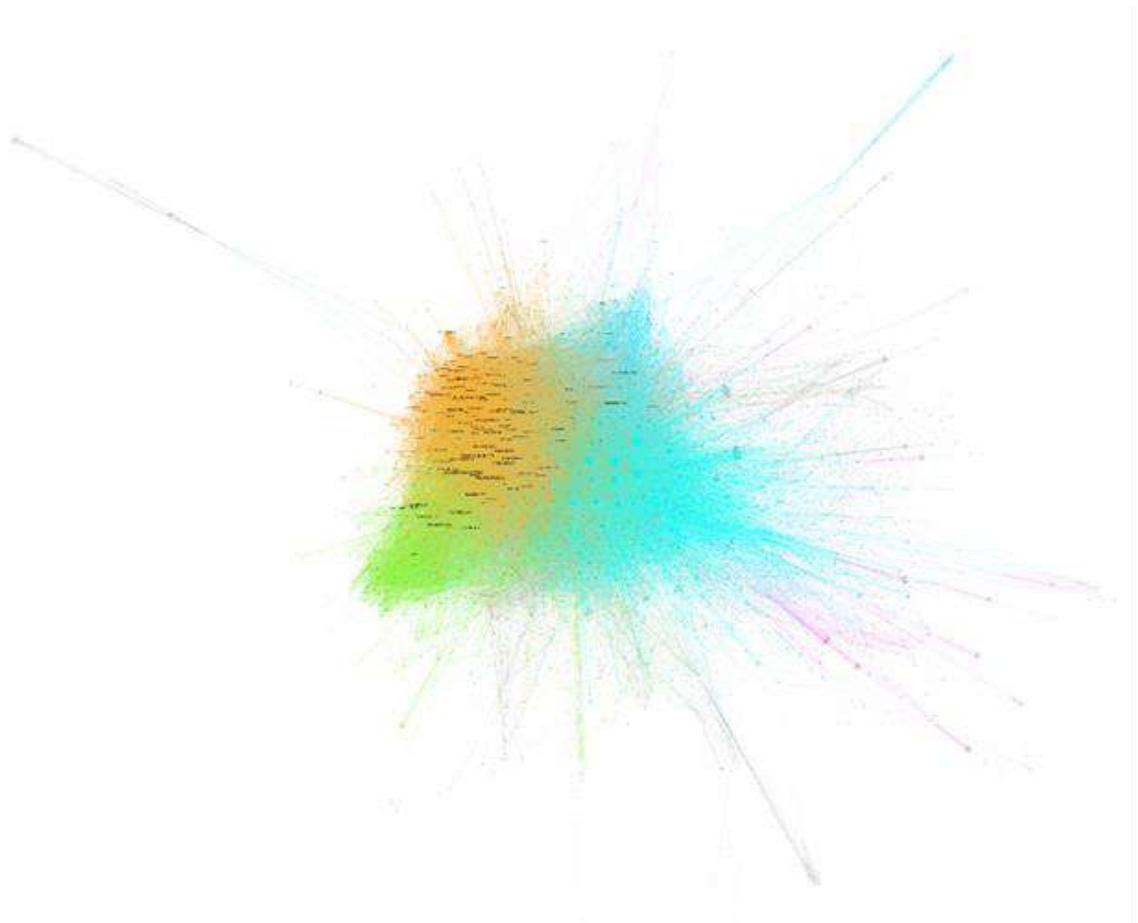
Figure 1. *The meta-partisan “news” ecosystem within the 2022 Elections YouTube network*



When partitioned in algorithmic communities, Figure 2 locates these “news” channels (labeled) mostly in one major community (orange) together with religious organization-owned media SMNI News, government-owned media PTV, official Bongbong Marcos channel, and channels of known allies such as Toni Gonzaga Studio and Erwin Tulfo.

A number of channels also spill over neighboring communities of mainstream news media (blue) and Marcos Jr. partisan influencer and content creator (green) channels, as previously reported [here](#). Their close proximity to these adjacent communities allows them to function as a surrogate to journalistic reporting or a complement to politically charged content.

Figure 2. Meta-partisan “news” channels located in the 2022 Elections algorithmic communities



Constructing “Newsworthiness”

The use of news values serves as a gateway to the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem by projecting that the manipulative content contains information and commentaries that are of public relevance.

First, the news values inscribed in the videos manufacture “relevance” by serving as “[journalistic extensions](#).” What this means is that these “news” channels extend, expand, and expound on topics that are already talked about in mainstream media, often centering on elite actors and public events, in ways that are not necessarily of public interest but are politically provocative or beneficial to them.

For instance, a [Duterte News Report](#) video about the disqualification case against Marcos Jr. emphasizes his running mate Sara Duterte’s comment that insinuates that the case was concocted by their political rivals. The voice-over says: “Nanindigan din si Sara na walang basehan ang lahat ng disqualification cases laban kay Marcos na ayon sa kanya ay kagagawan ng mga taong desperadong makabalik sa kapangyarihan.”

The inclusion of this political issue was used to pull in viewers due to the “importance” of the matter, but the video primarily served as a platform to deny its merits and condemn the opposition.

Another way that the channels manifest “relevance” is through reposting and curating published content from mainstream news outlets, partisan news sources, and social media posts, and editing them to advance their political agenda.

This upcycling of content, combined with the producers' own content, which in most cases are additional commentary, result in the *extensions of journalistic extensions*. These are partisan content found in other partisan channels within the network that fortify the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem, such as [IDOL CALOY](#) reposting influencer Banat By's commentary and [Showbiz Fanaticz](#) placing edited footage of vlogger Thinking Pinoy in its video.

Second, [news values produce “affective” content](#) to elicit emotional responses from audiences. Affect, through our emotions, can shape our thinking, decision-making, and corresponding actions and reactions towards the content we see online.

More than employing superlativeness using titles such as “[SHOCKING BREAKING NEWS](#),” affect enables movement or force to make a story resonate with viewers. One such tactic used to move audiences' emotions is by dramatizing narratives and claiming to represent the public opinion. In one [Showbiz Fanaticz](#) video, an unknown voice-over comments on the supposed



“Makabagbag-damdamin na pahayag ni dating senador Bongbong Marcos na hinangaan ng maraming netizens matapos ang naging one-on-one talk with Boy Abunda.”

Lastly, news values perform “newsworthiness” not only to the audience but also to the platform. [Platforms like YouTube value popularity and engagement](#) and reward content that generates significant likes, shares, and comments with visibility and prestige through search and recommendation rankings.

By using keywords, tags, and hashtags in YouTube's embedded video formats and descriptions, as well as consistently uploading timely content during pivotal events of the election season such as debates, channels within the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem leverage the logics of the YouTube recommendation system.

A [PH Latest video](#) takes this even further by livestreaming and showing live comments and reactions, while its description contains hashtags which are unrelated to the video in order to gain more traction.

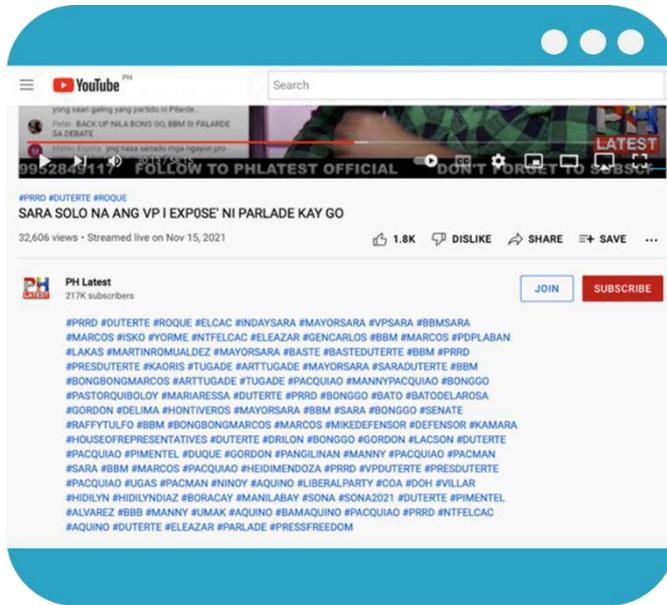


Figure 3.
Over-use of hashtags to game the algorithm

News in style, propaganda in substance

The appropriation of news styles functions as a legitimization tool to position the “news” channels as “alternative” sources of news and information on matters concerning Philippine elections. By packaging themselves as “news” without necessarily delivering news, they are able to manipulate audiences to perceive their content as a product of journalistic practice and prescribe a partisan interpretation of political events.

The videos’ news styles primarily invoke journalistic authority using audio-visual and textual cues that are traditionally associated with broadcast news media. These audio-visual cues include the use of a broadcast character generator, news crawler, and reporter voice-over, which are conventionally used to denote the significance, impact, and timeliness of news stories.

Figure 4.
Layering the video
with audio-visual
“news” cues



However, the channels’ use of textual cues perverted journalistic conventions of accuracy, fairness, and professionalism. The videos’ superimposed headlines are marked with biased framing, vulgarity, and incoherence.

For instance, in one of the videos under the [Duterte News Report channel](#), the headline contains expletives against VP Leni Robredo, which reads “*Kilalang Direktor, Sinupalpal si Robredo, Palpak kang Bruha ka Lugaw.*” In addition, the use of temporal markers such as “Live News” and “Breaking News” do not correspond to its intended meaning. The video of [SHOWBIZ CHIKA-DORO’s](#) that is labeled “Live News” is not a live coverage but an edited video with additional clips elsewhere. “Breaking News” is also utilized in almost all channels with content that do not depict immediacy and impact.

In the absence of substantive reporting, the “news” channels use footage and excerpts as proxy evidence from SMNI, from government media channels like Presidential Communications Operations Office and RTVMalacañang, and from mainstream news media like GMA News and CNN Philippines. SMNI was the preferred source for many of the channels, claiming that SMNI has “no bias” despite the overt partisan allegiance of its owner, commentators, and guests in the reposted shows.

Apart from cherry picking politically favorable details from their reporting, the channels often use mainstream news media footage to ridicule and discredit the outlets. In one [video](#), excerpts from CNN Philippines’ Presidential Debate were used

to downplay its integrity and mock Marcos Jr.'s opponents. The host quips, *“Hindi po nila tayo mapipigilan mga kababayan na magkomento diyan sa debate kuno na iyan, debate ba iyan o maritesan lang?”*

Some video clips were also manipulated to make it appear that the content was from somewhere else. For instance, [Duterte News Report](#) lifted a newscast from CNN Philippines and overlays it with the text “news.ph,” which misrepresents its source material.

Figure 5.
CNN Philippines
newscast edited to
lead to an
unknown website



A closer look into the discursive styles of the channels revealed patterns that contain extreme bias and fabricated information, without regard for journalistic standards of accountability, objectivity, and neutrality. Falsehoods were repeatedly used in the content, such as ABS-CBN’s failure to pay their taxes and Robredo’s being the presidential candidate for the Liberal Party.

Persistent misrepresentation of the speech and actions of political candidates were also salient in the videos. For instance, [an unknown voice-over](#) suggests that *“Dalawang tao lang ang pinagdududahan ng tao na manghihingi ng advance questions, ito ay sina Senator Pacquiao at VP Robredo”*, despite no evidence supporting such.

Blueprint of manipulation

When legitimized as “news,” these channels employ manipulation strategies that crystallize the political propaganda and disinformation. Not only are they advancing manipulative discourse, but they are prescribing a partisan lens of interpreting political events and issues that makes viewers susceptible to dismissing evidence, evading logic, or rationalizing misconduct.

One key strategy is the invocation of the moral ascendancy of the politicians and their political agenda. The videos allege the political actions and decisions of their endorsed political actors as politically “just” and are based on genuine intent, moral judgment, and careful consideration.

For instance, [SHOWBIZ CHIKA-DORO](#) features blogger Sass Sasot who justifies Sara Duterte’s decision to run as VP and not as president, claiming that “[Sara] wants to learn, get more adept at being a leader... build her own political kingdom and not simply inherit it from her father” instead of it being a calculated political scheme.

In the process of elevating the politicians’ moral stature, the videos also frame political competition and opposition as morally corrupt. [BANAT BALITA](#) showcases SMNI commentator Mike Abe who asks “*Tawagin n’yong magnanakaw si BBM, bakit? May ebidensya ba kayo? Tapos sasabihin nyo, karapatan nyong ilabas ang saloobin nyo?*” and calls out people for their alleged malicious accusations against Marcos Jr.

This purported “moral” character and justifications of politicians have become a mechanism to rationalize falsehood and factual distortions in the face of well-documented evidence and overt politicking.

Also ubiquitous in these videos is the vilification of “enemies” who are embodied by opposing political actors, mainstream news and political institutions, and activist groups. These “enemies” are discredited, maligned, and assigned fault, at the alleged expense of either the endorsed politicians or the public.

News outlets are constantly [accused of “bias”](#) and are purportedly against “anything good for the country.” In [AKO PINOY’s](#) video, influencer “Banat By” accuses survey firms of purposely releasing survey results that report Rodrigo Duterte’s decline in voter preference as VP, claiming that *“Merong nag papamind condition na si Pangulong Duterte, wag tumakbong VP.”*

Political opponents also are frequently berated by calling them “*bobo*”, “*walang laman ang utak*”, and “*dinadaan sa emosyon*” for their supposed incompetence and spitefulness. For instance, the [unknown host in PH Latest](#) undermines the accomplishments of VP Robredo by asking, “*Ang dami niyo na palang nagawa, bakit hindi bilib ang tao?*” in reference to her polling performance.

By framing these actors and institutions as enemies not only of particular politicians but also of the public, the channels can dismiss the former’s truth claims as ill-intent and borne out of their ineptitude, while helping the “hero” politicians maneuver and deflect legitimate criticisms and allegations.

What makes disinformation ultimately potent is the promise of political enlightenment. These videos make the public believe that they are victims of a political system and that these alternative “news” channels can help them know the “truth.”

The videos first establish the “conspiracy,” such as the claims of deceit or “*mapanlinlang na 1986 EDSA revolution*” by the [unknown voice-over](#) purportedly

echoing comments of political scientist Clarita Carlos. Then they start to deny and distort facts, including the supposedly [false claims of the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth](#) “*dahil napagdidismis ung mga kaso*” and “*ung mga sinasabi nilang Martial Law victims, eh wala naman.*”

These channels convince viewers that by subscribing to the narratives of the video, they are able to “open their eyes” (“*namulat*”) to the truth. Social media was said to be crucial for people to know the “truth” (“*nalalaman ang katotohanan*”) against purported propaganda in books and in schools. There is also further invitation to viewers to subscribe to their channels and similar accounts and personalities who are or can be aligned with their political agenda.

For example, [Showbiz Fanaticz](#) invites people to watch Marcos Jr.’s interview with Boy Abunda for “*milyung milyung Pilipino ay nagpapasalamat kay Boy Abunda... nakapagbukas ng isipan ng maraming mamamayan kung sino ang dapat iboto.*”

Traversing the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem

The “news” channels we investigated infuse the connective capacity of the algorithms and the institutional credibility of news in manufacturing propaganda and disinformation in ways that construct a highly partisan political world. What makes them distinct is not their engagement in manipulation per se, but the reliance of their false and perverted claims on the lies, fabrications, and omissions of other politically-aligned personalities, state apparatuses, and online accounts.

This meta-partisan “news” ecosystem is self-reliant because it creates its own untruths and controversies, as well as self-sustaining for it augments, extends, and magnifies these same narratives into new ones. Once one of these claims becomes immune to fact-checking, empirical evidence, and logical explanations, it

becomes the foundation from which the rest can stand and withstand scrutiny.

The news values serve as an entry point to the ecosystem by manufacturing the “newsworthiness” that call viewers to consume information that directly or indirectly affects their public life, even if the video contains little to none that would be of public interest.

The proliferation of videos portraying hyper-partisan and inflammatory topics as “newsworthy” is normalizing the perception that these stories warrant public attention in the form of views, likes, and comments and thus, sending signals to the platform algorithms to privilege such content in its recommendations.

Once inside the ecosystem by clicking on a partisan “news” video, it is the aesthetic and discursive news styles that lend the content the legitimacy and, in its reappropriated form, the authenticity to engage and captivate users. It draws from the credibility and expertise of journalistic practice to achieve a semblance of it, without the accountability that media practitioners exercise.

By remaining “amateur” but borrowing from “professional” visual, aural, and performative codes, these “news” channels occupy an inviting middle ground, especially among audiences who have developed ambivalence or skepticism of mainstream media.

The ecosystem’s core component is in its manipulative discourse, functioning as a schematic anchor from which to interpret, evaluate, and respond to political messages and actions. The “news” channels as recommended next to each other are cultivating a hyper-partisan political worldview that categorically rejects particular factual information and those that uphold its integrity (e.g., mainstream media, historians, researchers) and perpetuates falsehoods of their own creation as ground truth.

The meta-partisan “news” ecosystem stabilizes this political reality such that no amount of fact-checking can unravel the convoluted lie built through its multitude of manipulative scaffoldings.

Through the concept of the meta-partisan “news” ecosystem, we shift our interest from “fact-checking” to “ecosystem tracing” to materialize the orchestrated manipulation of public discourse not only by debunking individual lie after another but by exposing the schematics of manipulation that operate the disinformation machinery.

Conclusion

The extent of our empirical investigation does not confirm nor deny that these “news” videos are considered “news” but we are making the point about the increasingly nebulous definitions of “news” in contemporary media environments.

Amidst the decline in media trust, pervasiveness of creator culture, and the emphasis on the autonomy of users in choosing their sources of political information, actors with vested political interests exploit the gray areas to manufacture their own partisan “news” content to counter fair and free democratic discourse.

The meta-partisan “news” ecosystem is a product of years of economic investment, political schemes, and platform manipulation, as well as the consequence of right-wing populist politics, fence-sitting media organizations, and futile platform moderation policies.

This means that dismantling this [complex architecture](#) requires incapacitating its drivers and enablers – from the unscrupulous politicians and allies, the millions of investments in these activities, the complicit social media platforms, and to the organized disinformation industry that operate the ecosystem.

It is high time to shed light on their dirty work – now that’s newsworthy.

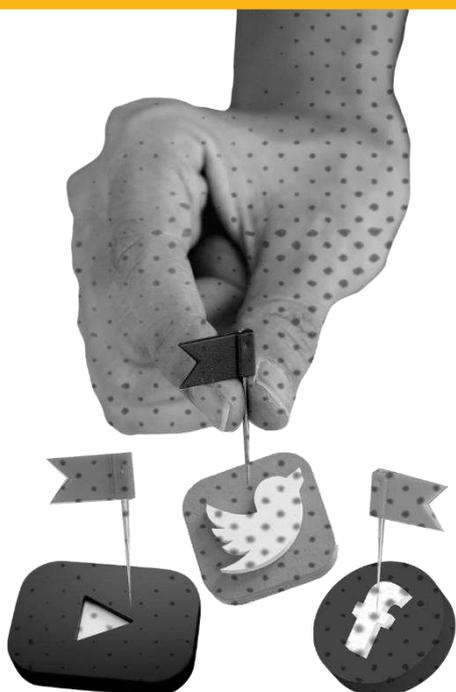


CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Digital Public Pulse (DPP) project primarily examines the 2022 Philippine General Elections, but its findings exemplify more encompassing realities and trajectories of contemporary politics in the Philippines within digitally mediated media environments. The scope, scale, and multiplicity of the research provide a broad view of the digital election landscape, involving a heterogeneous collection of networks, discourses, and technologies that might be excluded or overlooked in normative election research. At the same time, our analytical approach warrants specificity in our analysis that enable us to map the movements, frictions, and relations that shape the elections within digital platforms, and pinpoint their linkages to larger political, economic, and social structures.

In this chapter, we conclude the research report by identifying the key implications of the study on politics, democracy, and Philippine society. Our analysis builds on earlier empirical election, disinformation, and digital media research by Filipino researchers and their collaborators, as well as on concepts, methods, and theories on communication and media, social sciences, and data science. We present recommendations for key stakeholders that are intended to protect and uphold the integrity of elections, demand accountability from political actors and platforms, and promote political freedom and democracy.

CONCLUSION



Platforms are new political bailiwicks

Our research revealed how different social media spaces have become new political bailiwicks during the 2022 Philippine General Elections, as they were dominated by specific political candidates.

Twitter appeared to be the political bailiwick of Robredo and other opposition candidates, as actors from this group together with their supporters constituted the most prominent clusters on the platform. Opposition actors were also most central in the network, being the

focal point of interactions of the biggest number of users in the network across quarters.

Meanwhile, Facebook served as the political bailiwick of the Dutertes and their allies, benefiting from the entrenched influence operations established in 2016 during the presidential run of the family's patriarch.

In the 2022 Philippine General Elections, Sara Duterte was able to capitalize on the social media pages and groups dedicated to supporting her father, as these were activated to generate support for her in her vice-presidential bid. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., as Sara Duterte's running mate in the elections, benefited from the large-scale influence of Duterte on Facebook, evident in the close links of their official accounts and their supporters in Facebook communities.

Finally, YouTube was observed as the political bailiwick of the Marcoses, with multiple Marcos-aligned channels leading the discourse on the platform. Years-long of pro-Marcos content on the platform enabled the then-presidential candidate to cast a wide net among audiences through the platform's recommendation algorithms. As seen in the network analysis, Marcos and Marcos-aligned channels were prominent and numerous, and they were focal points of other channels.

Clearly, the transformation of platforms as digital bailiwicks did not go unnoticed by political actors, as strategies had been employed to gain traction in these spaces.

On Twitter, the regularly trending Marcos Jr.-related hashtags, and evident attacks against the opposition where actors like Robredo and 1Sambayan appeared, could be seen as an effort to gain a larger hold on the platform where his biggest political rival appeared to dominate. On Facebook, efforts by opposition supporters to dominate the discourse were observed with the high activity of Robredo communities in sharing political content. On YouTube, however, little dents had been made on the dense connections of Marcos in the platform, as they remained most prominent throughout the election year.

New forms of political intermediation

Politicians have long relied on political intermediaries to engage voters ‘on the ground’ on their behalf, including but not limited to family networks, political party mates, and local political brokers such as barangay captains and local leaders (Cruz, Labonne, & Querobin, 2017) and grassroots communities (Aranda, 2021). The rise of digital media as a key political battleground has introduced new political intermediaries as well; it was first studied during the 2016 Philippine General Elections (Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, & Arugay, 2020) and then during the 2019 Midterm Elections (Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2022) and the intervening years (Ong & Cabbuag, 2022; Soriano & Gaw, 2022a).



This research documents evolving and emerging forms of political intermediation, both performed by interlocutors identified in previous research, as well as by the new and hybrid actors borne out of the entanglement of the contemporary political landscape, vernacular creative cultures, and the digital economy.

Drawing from the empirical data discussed in Chapters 3 to 5, we summarize below these key categories of intermediaries and their new patterns of political intermediation in the digital public sphere:

Politicians’ social media accounts

Verified accounts of politicians produce their prominence through direct, calculated, and persuasive communication with digital publics at scale, unrestrained by and superseding the gatekeeping of media and social

institutions. With their own ‘media’ platforms, politicians can disregard and dismiss mainstream media altogether

Hyperpartisan media

These minor players in the traditional media economy thrive on digital platforms by eliciting, stoking, and inflaming hyper-partisan political sensibilities and in some instances, by promoting disinformation. They are used as the source of ‘news’ by non-institutional partisan intermediaries to counter mainstream media, academics, and political opponents.

Platform ‘native’ accounts

Distinct from ‘fake news’ accounts (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2017), these digital pages, accounts, and channels straddle between their non-political identity (e.g., entertainment, gaming, lifestyle) and their political interlocution (e.g. news, political commentary, political campaigning). This often positions them in a gray area that evades normative categories of political communication and which, to a certain extent, enables them to manipulate unsuspecting publics of their political agenda.

Influencers and content creators

Acting as representatives of the ‘ordinary’ people (Abidin, 2021), they turn the political into the personal and vice versa to cultivate popular political appeal for particular candidates. In the absence of expertise or status, they capitalize on their authenticity and intimacy with their followers to advance populist political commentary, spotlighting the voice of the ‘majority’ and reproaching political opponents as ‘elite.’

Entertainment personalities

Leveraging their traditional media capital, entertainment personalities build their own media platforms online by turning politics into media spectacles for the digital economy. Politicians are treated as celebrity guests in their online programs, and the personalities’ entertainment identity is reappropriated as public service that provides ‘political knowledge’ in the context of the election.

Online groups

Facebook groups perform a political function in two ways – coalescing the politically engaged into partisan communities, potentially led by digital

political brokers, and penetrating non-political communities with political content. They are a proxy to community mobilization offline that could inspire meaningful political participation, while also facilitating political tribalism, incendiary hyperpartisanship, and/or undemocratic depoliticization.

Individual users

Specific to Twitter, users can instigate ‘connective’ actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) to set political agendas, popularize candidates, and mainstream criticism and dissent. With common political interests among loosely connected relations, they can surface marginalized topics, issues, and voices, albeit ad hoc and ephemeral, and vulnerable to manipulation.

The rise of these old and new intermediaries and the increasing sophistication of their political intermediation are expected to fortify the power dynamics of clientelist politics and exacerbate the issue of unregulated political spending.

In both the aftermath of the 2016 and 2022 Philippine General Elections, known influencers and media personalities who have publicly supported the winning camps have been appointed to government offices (CNN Philippines, 2016; Ranada, 2022; Romero, 2019). Research work and investigative journalism have also surfaced the covert economy of micro-influencers, trolls, and fake news operators involved in electioneering online (Elemia, 2021; Ong & Cabañes, 2018; Ong, Tapsell, & Curato, 2019).

These political practices are evidently not new, yet their proponents and operators remain unaccountable, and their political strategies and tactics are becoming more complex, more dubious, and more difficult to monitor and scrutinize.

Hybridity of politics in the Philippines



The findings showcase the hybrid elements that constitute Philippine electoral politics in digital media. These actors, roles, systems, and institutions have evolved in digital spaces in light of “combinations and competitions between the newer and older media” resulting in their hybridity (Iannelli, 2015) in use, roles, and logics online.

Hybrid media use

Perhaps the most salient manifestation of this hybridity is the way politicians are combining traditional media, such as print and television, and new media in forwarding their agendas. Our social network analyses have demonstrated the close ties between mainstream news and political candidates, and how media actors are able to tap into a prominent community of news-reading audiences in the network. Simply put, politicians are able to still make use of the coverage by traditional news media outfits to reach wide audiences.

Meanwhile, they are able to exploit the affordances of online spaces and bypass gatekeepers to directly communicate with the voting public and even tailor-fit messages to their targets. In doing so, politicians are able to build relationships with the voting public as they reach them directly through their online spaces.

Hybrid roles and identities

The hybridity of politics in the Philippines is also a product of the participatory nature of digital media, which allows for ordinary users to rise as hybrid news brokers, who are able to disseminate news and political information to audiences while avoiding repression (Voltmer, Selvik, & Høigilt, 2021) and even accountability for potentially spreading misleading information as they take on the role of private citizens.

Media outfits are also taking on a hybrid role, as they have shifted from a straightforward reporting of facts, to providing explanations and directing users to links to related information, to minimize attempts by malicious actors in taking reports out of context and spreading misinformation. Beyond serving as sources of information, our findings also reveal how the media is taking on the role of building communities, as exhibited by Rappler.

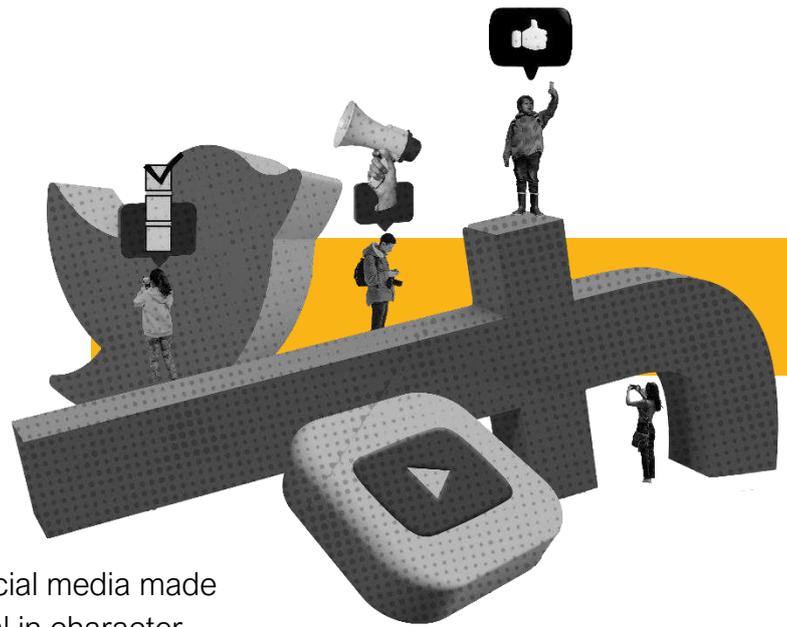
Hybrid media identities were also revealed in the research, with the rise in prominence of media outfits owned by religious organizations with close ties to the Dutertes and Marcoses. This places them in a precarious position of balancing the interest of audiences, politicians, and their religious affiliations.

Hybrid logics in digital media

Various logics overlap online as actors struggle to forward their agendas. Celebrity logic (Gamson, 1994) was evident in how politicians are ‘celebritized’ through talk show guestings and are even treated as pop idols by fandoms in forwarding their support for their presidential bets. The use of celebrity logic is also apparent in the involvement of celebrities in politics to draw support from the public.

Meanwhile, news media logic governed how ordinary citizens and content creators package their content to appear credible in the political content they produce online. The use of journalistic styles and genres in “reporting” current events was apparent in YouTube videos that re-frame issues for the benefit of the candidate they support and attack rivals during the elections. Finally, scientific logic was apparent in the “evidence”-based discourse on Twitter, and the co-optation of survey research methods by online content creators to make their videos appear unbiased and credible.

Platform configuring politics



The discourse around social media platforms and their role during elections tend to be either technologically deterministic ('Social media made candidate X win') or socio-political in character ('Candidate X won because of their social media strategy' or 'Filipinos rallied for candidate X on social media'). These headline-grabbing claims are often simplistic and overstate the power of the platforms, the politicians, or the people. More so, it obscures the nuances of the mediation of social media platforms in an already complex political landscape of decades-long political patronage, fragile democratic institutions, and fragmented publics.

The research engages the social media platforms more meaningfully by regarding them as socio-technical actors in the election discourse, taking into account how their technological infrastructure *structures* social relations. What this means is that it does not dictate politics but sets the conditions, parameters, and limitations of producing political knowledge, facilitating political relations, and shaping political experiences.

Because platforms are designed and governed differently from one another, the research embodied a platform-specific lens in analyzing how the *politics of a platform* shape the *politics in the platform*. Drawing from our findings and building on our initial analysis (Bunquin & Gaw, 2022), we discuss the political character of social media platforms in the study:

Facebook

The platform affords the (re)framing of news, issues, and events that were either first reported by news media or framed by other political actors or groups. Actors supersede institutional frames by making partisan discourse *popular* on the platform, by capitalizing on Facebook's engagement-based algorithms, lenient content moderation mechanisms, and broad communities of interests.

As partisan conversations cascade from public pages and semi-private accounts to private groups, they cultivate more hyper-partisan communities where there are more gray areas for political actors to exploit. Because platform intervention is too little (and often comes, too late), these hyper-partisan communities are mainstreamed and are mobilized for political ends.

Twitter

The platform is public and decentralized, allowing for more open political participation and expression through direct interactions with various actors and topics. Political agenda-setting is more inclusive, such that traditional actors, emergent influencers, and marginalized groups and users can meaningfully partake in discourse.

While the locus of engagement is still often mainstream media and political actors, communities converge based on issues, events, and interests instead of personalities. This makes the political potential of its communities more ephemeral than enduring, and its political divisions more porous than impenetrable. Because of its structure, Twitter is also vulnerable to abuse and manipulation by obscure, unidentifiable accounts.

YouTube

YouTube is a breeding ground for hybrid politics, where news and politics fuse with entertainment, lifestyle, and niche interests. This makes political interlocution in the platform more ambiguous and liminal, allowing for 'alternative' sources of political information and knowledge to thrive. The platform's recommendation algorithm prioritizes the 'personal' rather than the 'popular' and it leads YouTube to cultivate more insulated partisan communities.

Hyper partisanship is incentivized in the platform as it draws audiences into politically-provocative content and towards content creators with shared

political interests. Without the purview of public stakeholders and the narrow definitions of objectionable content by YouTube, the platform can be exploited to promote disinformation and political manipulation.

The platforms' governance structures configure the contours of politics in the platform, creating new regimes of influence favorable to non-traditional political actors, fostering democratic/anti-democratic norms and practices, and enabling the exercise of political agency within the bounds allowed by the platform.

These have implications on what kind of political cultures will endure in the digital public sphere and how political participation would look like post-elections. More importantly, these platform configurations define the extent to which actors can be monitored, criticized, and made accountable for their political schemes, prior to the regulatory interventions of the state and civil society organizations.

These implications from the research and the reckoning it inspires call for various stakeholders to take a more purposeful role post-elections and in upcoming elections. We discuss below some key recommendations and directions for stakeholders on how to engage the evidence found in the research and what are the ways forward to have a more meaningful impact on Philippine democracy and the future of the Filipino people.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Government

Our findings present various strategies that political actors employ to steer the online discourse in their favor, such as using political influencers, building affective alliances (Bronstein, Aharony, & Bar-Ilan, 2018) with supporters online, and even engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior.

Some of these strategies and tactics are currently not covered by existing election campaign laws and policies in the Philippines, such as the declaration of paid media influencers and other online placements in campaign spending. However, under-the-radar influence operations and disinformation systems persist (Devlin, 2020). Such operations have been in existence since previous elections and have only been augmented in 2022, but evidently, the government is unable to crack down on these manipulative entities and hold candidates who benefit from their manipulation.

Thus, we recommend a review of existing policies with the intention to update them in light of developments in new media, while engaging experts, platforms themselves, and known influence operators. It is also essential to expand the definition of ‘political spending’ outside of political advertisements and to develop ways to uncover ‘stealth’ campaign strategies on platforms.

Aside from policy, the government must also take the lead in pushing for the responsible use of social media while being cognizant of new media’s role in contemporary democracy. This can be done by recalibrating existing media literacy curricula and programs, especially since media technologies and practices are constantly evolving.



Media

The current model of news distribution in platforms appears to mimic the conventional broadcast distribution model, wherein information emanates from a single, centralized source. While this model is able to capture large volumes of audiences, it is possible that media is only reaching the same types of audiences in the long run. With the emergence of new political intermediaries, news media becomes just one of the infinitely many sources of news online.

We recommend that mainstream news media consider how to rebuild news-consuming and news-engaging audiences by focusing on audience communities, rather than just individual information consumers. As shown in our social network findings, new political intermediaries become successful in capturing audiences due to their ability to cultivate their own online communities.

News media can also take advantage of platforms and the presence of diverse individuals in these spaces to diversify election coverage and include sectors whose agendas and issues are not brought to the fore. Current coverage was candidate-driven, as revealed by the close links of politicians with the news media through our SNA, while civil society appeared as an isolated group without any ties to reporters or news channels.

Aside from surfacing underreported and underrepresented election issues and communities, diverse news coverage can help audiences make better sense of issues, and develop to become ‘interpreting citizens’ (Porto, 2007) who have the ability to understand political realities in a multifaceted and nuanced manner. Such ability can only be developed if the information environment provides them with diverse stories and issues.



Civil Society

The lack of civil society representation in the media may be a function of their general lack of visibility.

Thus, we encourage members of the civil society to engage in strategic communication online, which can begin by engaging with highly central actors in the platform to mainstream sectoral agendas and issues.

Civil society organizations can also leverage the affordances of the platform to make issue-based politically agnostic spaces for dialogue for undecided or even open-minded voters based on their focus area or social cause. The use of Facebook groups, Twitter spaces, and informative YouTube channels can become starting points for civil society in enriching online discourses about elections.

Finally, we also urge civil society organizations to continually take part in efforts to monitor 'below the radar' political actors and help in the development of frameworks for accountability.



Platform companies

Since the 2016 US Elections, social media companies have been under intense public scrutiny for their alleged complicity in perpetuating mis/disinformation, manipulation, and political polarization on their platforms. After much hesitation, they have started initiating policy reforms and formal interventions to address these issues, such as those related to data privacy, content moderation, and influence operations.

However, these problems persist and developments in the companies either fall short in solving them completely or are too slow to act to meaningfully make an impact. Most of these reforms are also only in response to the issues, policies, and

pressure from governments and civil society actors from the Global North (e.g., EU's General Data Protection Regulation, US Senate investigations, Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation).

We call for platform companies to pay attention to the impact of their governance structure on democracies in the Global South, particularly in the Philippines where disinformation and manipulation are becoming endemic in public life. There must be grounded and nuanced interventions that specifically tackle the threats to democracy in the Philippines and should not be just copy-paste policies that are not relevant in the local context.

This means expanding the definitions of objectionable content in the platform to account for the rise of deceitful and unreliable sources of information and of hyperpartisan actors who engage in abusive and malicious speech and practices to distort political discourse.

Interventions should also attend to the evolution of the strategies and techniques used for manipulation and circumvention of platform policies beyond the election and during day-to-day politics, when they are tested and improved for mobilization in major democratic events.

We recommend the use of agile and early detection mechanisms to minimize the adverse consequences of problematic and unethical content and practices. More importantly, platforms should not only strengthen their content moderation work but also institute a network approach to governance to implicate groups of actors that collectively undermine democratic processes.



Academe

Digital Public Pulse emphasizes the importance of academics and researchers making use of our expertise and tools to generate knowledge and insight about critical moments and movements in our democracy. As scholars interested in elections and politics, we have strong theoretical foundations that serve as our analytical anchors in problematizing and analyzing political phenomena across disciplines.

However, the researchers believe that we need more empirical work to integrate new complexities such as digital platforms and disinformation and to evolve existing frameworks in our understanding of political processes in the Philippines. As much as this research is comprehensive in its scope, its findings also beget further investigation to provide more refined contexts and more intricate details in our evidence and traces of data.

At the theoretical level, we encourage researchers to deepen their understanding of key concepts introduced and examined in the research, including but not limited to political networks, political intermediation, legitimization/delegitimization, and disinformation and manipulation. There is also room to iterate our methods in this research and innovate them to respond to the limitations of the research and emerging research questions.

Some directions we recommend would be to perform complementary research that delves into the users' political experiences and participation on social media, as well as to explore TikTok as a political space given its rising prominence among Filipino audiences. Beyond doing research about elections, it is equally important to analyze the digital political landscape post-election and during the intervening years as it sets the conditions on how future elections will take place.

A key finding of the research is also the epistemological crisis of how political knowledge is created, engaged, and learned. Concepts like evidence and knowledge are becoming sites of contestation, despite clear-cut standards and established protocols in the academe.

Academics are also scarcely present in the network while also being under attack by hyper-partisan and anti-democratic actors. It is high time for academic institutions to defend and strengthen their role as purveyors of knowledge and truth, as well as to acknowledge the unsettling reality that scholars, researchers, and educators need to change our ways of thinking, teaching, and communicating to be able to renew our relevance in society.



Public

Election reporting and research oftentimes position the public at the receiving end of political campaigns and influence operations. However, it is clear from the research that voters and citizens have agency and they are considered actors who have the capacity to emplace themselves in the network and frame political agenda.

We underline this power by the people to take a more active role in election and political discourses by leveraging the ‘connective’ affordances of the platforms and directly demanding accountability from those in power. This does not mean, however, that the public is not subject to deceit, manipulation, and polarization, and one key recommendation for them is to be more conscious when using online platforms for political information.

Hence, it is imperative that we understand how the platforms organize the political information we are exposed to, how it modulates the visibility of political actors and intermediaries who can influence our decision-making, and how it shapes our political orientation with its governance structure.

This might mean deliberately configuring the platforms to advance our interests, such as diversifying our interactions to ensure cross-ideological exposure, amplifying reliable sources in our immediate network, and creating safe spaces for discourse for our immediate network.



CHAPTER

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Conclusion and Recommendations

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Research team and partners



University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication Department of Communication Research

Since its inception in 1975, the Department of Communication Research of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP CMC) has offered courses designed to develop scholarship, skills-proficiency, and professionalism among its students. The Department undertakes research and extension projects which benefit stakeholders within and beyond the academe.

By teaching and conducting communication research within the context of processes and effects, and grounding these with practical experience through fieldwork and internships, the Department ensures that its graduates are equipped to contribute to the practice of social research in the academe, in the communication and media industries, and in government and non-government sectors.

The Faculty is at the cutting-edge of communication research in the Philippines. Its members are experts in basic and applied quantitative and qualitative research, as well as in the related areas of political communication, health communication, social mobilization, strategic communication, advertising, and public relations/information, among others. The Faculty also extends its services to assist developmental efforts by local and international government and non-government organizations as well as business and industry groups. Through their research, publications, and extension work, the Faculty thus contributes to the development of its discipline in particular and to society as a whole.



Philippine Media Monitoring Lab

The Philippine Media Monitoring (PMM) Laboratory, or SUBAYBAY, is one of two flagship laboratories of SURI, which concentrates on researches that examine the principles, procedures, and practices behind media content creation and production, as well as studies that interrogate the public's reception of, and engagement with, media content.

The research laboratories of SURI are housed under SALIK, a wide-ranging initiative of the UP CMC Department of Communication Research aimed at establishing a hub that will become the focal point for communication and media research in the Philippines. The ultimate goal of this Hub is to advance the teaching and practice of communication and media scholarship in the country, hence the appellation Hub for Excellence in Communication and Media Research in the Philippines.

PMM Lab Members*

Jon Benedik A. Bunquin

Jon Benedik A. Bunquin is an Assistant Professor and the co-convenor of the Philippine Media Monitoring Laboratory at the Department of Communication Research, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication. He uses quantitative and computational methods to study how networked environments shape the communication of political and scientific information. He has presented and published work on the political communication networks of the Filipino youth, networks of online social movements, political participation, and science communication in various local and international conferences and journals. He is set to pursue his PhD degree in Communication and Media Studies at the University of Oregon as a Fulbright scholar. He earned his MA Communication and BA Journalism (cum laude) degrees from the University of the Philippines.

Fatima Gaw

Fatima Gaw is an Assistant Professor and the co-convenor of the Philippine Media Monitoring Laboratory at the Department of Communication Research, College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines. Her research centers on the mediation of platforms, algorithms, and digital technologies in cultural production, politics, and public discourse. Her recent work involves studying networked disinformation, manipulation, and resistance on digital media, with focus on platforms, influencers, and social movements and has been published in international and regional journals and conferences. She is an incoming PhD student at Northwestern University and has a Master's degree in Digital Communication and Culture from the University of Sydney and a Bachelor's degree in Broadcast Communication (magna cum laude), from the University of the Philippines.

*As of July 30, 2022

Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo

Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication Research of the College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines Diliman. She teaches qualitative research analysis in the undergraduate and the graduate studies programs. She has an MA degree in Women and Development Studies and a doctorate in Communication. Her research interests are gender, family communication, communication and culture, representation in advertisements, feminist standpoint, and participatory communication. She also has fifteen years of experience in active development work as a trainer, a community radio program producer/broadcaster, and a community organizer. She is currently active on a health project evaluation, research projects on online small-town collective recall and parents mediating mediation as rituals of connection. Assoc. Prof. Baldo-Cubelo regularly holds webinar workshops on safe spaces, work-life balance, and online interviewing/FGD facilitating.

Fernando dIC. Paragas

Fernando dIC. Paragas is the Dean of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UPCMC) and a Professor at its Department of Communication Research. Dr. Paragas is the Convenor of the Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform at the UP Center for Integrative Development Studies and the President of the Philippine Association for Communication and Media Research, Inc. He completed his PhD degree in Mass Communication at Ohio University as a scholar of the Fulbright program of the United States of America. Dr. Paragas earned his MA in Urban and Regional Planning, for which he received a Dean's Medallion, and BA in Communication Research, where he received the Best Undergraduate Thesis Award, at UP Diliman. Dr. Paragas had taught at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. In 2019, he received the Gawad Tsanselor sa Natatanging Guro sa UP Diliman and, in 2020, the Outstanding Senior Faculty Award of UPCM.

Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual

Ma. Rosel S. San Pascual, PhD is an Associate Professor of the Department of Communication Research of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication. She has a PhD in Communication (University of the Philippines Diliman), an MA in Communications and New Media (National University of Singapore), and a Master's degree in Development Economics (University of the Philippines Diliman). She has an undergraduate degree in Communication Research (University of the Philippines Diliman, magna cum laude) and was a Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society Awardee. Dr. San Pascual primarily teaches quantitative research methods, measurement and sampling, and quantitative data analysis at both undergraduate and graduate levels. She also actively engages in academic research on communication and new media, online discourse, media effects, mass media, ICT and development, political communication, and transnational migration and family communication.

Collaborators

Geoffrey A. Solano

Geoffrey A. Solano is an Associate Professor in Computer Science in the Mathematical and Computing Sciences Unit of the University of the Philippines Manila. He is also currently the Director of UP Manila's Information Management Service. He obtained his MSc and PhD in Computer Science from the University of the Philippines Diliman. He was a Visiting Scientific Researcher at the Universite de Cergy-Pontoise and the Universite de Bordeaux, both in France. He is currently a university scientist and is involved in various research areas such as data science, approximation algorithms, computational biology, as well as network science, and machine intelligence applied to health. He has authored over 50 publications in both local and international peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and conference proceedings.

Jalton Garces Taguibao

Jalton Garces Taguibao is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Management at the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines Diliman. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Masters in Public Management, and Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science from the University of the Philippines. He also completed postgraduate studies on Research Methodology and Quantitative Text Analytics from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany and Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil, respectively. His specializations are on public policy, policy research, and research methodology on the intersectional areas of political communication and public policy. He has also been actively involved in policy research and consultancy work for government agencies and civil society organizations since 1999. Dr. Taguibao is currently the Undergraduate Program Coordinator of the UP Department of Political Science and the Program Convenor of the Data Science for Public Policy Program (DSPP) of the University of the Philippines-System, Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

Miguel L. Canet

Miguel L. Canet is a Computer Science graduate from the University of the Philippines Manila. He is currently an AI developer specializing in natural language processing. He had been studying machine learning for almost three years now. His current interests in this field are transformers for text classification, text generation, paraphrasing, and text style transfer applications.

Jeremiah Sean De Guzman

Jeremiah Sean De Guzman is a student currently studying BS Computer Science at the University of the Philippines Manila. Prior to joining the DPP project, Mr. De Guzman was hired as an intern for a project in Azeus. For the DPP project, Mr. De Guzman was responsible for creating the Facebook graph network and its analysis.

Reina Erika Demillo

Reina Erika Demillo recently graduated and obtained her bachelor's degree in Computer Science with a Cum Laude distinction at the University of the Philippines Manila. Throughout her four years in college, she developed a passion for software engineering, natural language processing, and data science, and aspires to pursue a career in these fields.

Alona Jane Tesorero

Alona Jane Tesorero is an eager learner of technology and statistics. She faced the challenges of being a computer science student who lacked experience in computational logic, learned a great deal from her mentors and collaborators, and thence gained a comprehensive understanding of the importance of thorough research, regular communication, and sharing insights for a correct and well-defined system and objectives.

Interns

Katrina Ella G. de Mesa

Katrina Ella G. de Mesa is an incoming third-year BA Communication Research major. Her research interests include marginalized sectors, sex and gender, human behavior and cultures, health communication, educational communication, family communication, and political communication. She is currently a research apprentice at a private start-up and a freelance copywriter.

Mary Cielou B. Garganera

Mary Cielou B. Garganera is a Communication Research student at the University of the Philippines Diliman. In 2020, she co-authored the studies “‘Shoot them dead’: Influence of the Headlines and Captions of Online News Articles towards Comments on Facebook” and “A Critical Discourse Analysis of ABS-CBN’s Coverage of President Duterte’s Public Addresses on the COVID-19 Pandemic” which are both published in PCS Review. Her other research interests include film, new media, and women’s and gender studies.

Leila Marie S. Magno

Lei Magno completed her BA degree in Communication Research (magna cum laude) at UP Diliman. They were awarded Best Thesis in Communication Research for co-authoring the study “Negotiated Representation: A Three-Pronged Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Men-Loving-Men in Selected Filipino BL Films.” They currently work at the UP Department of Communication Research as a project assistant.

Sarah Faith D. Rulloda

Sarah Faith D. Rulloda is a senior BA Communication Research student at UP Diliman interested in political communication and new media studies. She is the lead author of the National Communication Research Conference 2021's Best Undergraduate Paper and she has also published articles in the Philippines Communication Society's refereed journal, PCS Review. She is looking forward to further studying social media and deliberative democracy. Outside of research, Sarah spends time serving her church and local community.

Luise Gayle C. Sangalang

Luise Gayle C. Sangalang is a fourth-year BA Communication Research student from the University of the Philippines Diliman College of Mass Communication. Her research interests include gender studies, political communication, cultural communication, fandom studies, and new media. Luise co-authored two articles on political communication as published in the Philippines Communication Society (PCS) Review 2020 and 2021 respectively. She is currently a member of the UP Communication Research Society, an academic organization in the university.

Partner Organizations

Rappler

Rappler is the Philippines' leading digital media company, led and founded by Nobel laureate Maria Ressa with the journalists who founded the Newsbreak investigative magazine. Formed as a company in July 2011 and launched as a website in January 2012, Rappler stands on three pillars – journalism, community, technology – that are bound by the shared values of trust, courage, integrity. It is composed of veteran journalists trained in broadcast, print, and web disciplines working with young, idealistic digital natives eager to report and find solutions to problems. Don Kevin Hapal, who leads Rappler's data and digital forensics team focused on disinformation research and business intelligence, and Dylan Salcedo, who is a data scientist under Rappler's digital forensics team, assisted with the Facebook component of the Digital Public Pulse Project.

AI4GOV

AI4GOV is a non-profit social technology startup providing civic and govtech solutions to improve public service delivery and promote citizen participation. AI4GOV enables transformative change by facilitating better relationships between stakeholders in local development through impact-driven innovations combining automation, data science, and community organizing. Julius Sambo and Rizza Quezon from AI4GOV helped in data processing for the Digital Public Pulse Project.

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Media Monitoring

AY 2021-2022

Facebook Textual Analysis

Patricia Emerie Dela Peña
Gizelle Mansos
Vincent Ira Perez

Twitter Textual Analysis

Christen Jan Catanyag
Lyra Lucero
Katrina Ella de Mesa

YouTube Textual Analysis

Leila Marie Magno
Giselle Manuel
Jericho James Natividad
Yllian San Luis

Social Network Analysis

Mary Cielou B. Garganera
Chloe Therese B. Rodriguez
Sarah Faith D. Rulloda
Luise Gayle C. Sangalang

Actor coders

Mary Cielou B. Garganera
Chloe Therese B. Rodriguez
Sarah Faith D. Rulloda
Luise Gayle C. Sangalang

Content coders

Angelle Rose C. Braganza
Aira M. Cardino
Anne Marielle S. Dela Peña
Patricia Emerie Dela Peña
Nicole Claire A. Desierto
Cleverlyn Mayuga
Naomi Czar B. Quiachon
Charles Jason C. Ramos
Yllian C. San Luis

Comm 297
Monitoring Election Discourses
AY 2021-2022

Ira Y. Cruz
Anjenica U. Durana
Candice Marie V. Perez
Julienne M. Urrea

Research assistants for
Political Manipulation research

Myrnelle A. Cinco
Luisa C. Pineda



OICA

Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts (OICA)

The Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts (OICA) seeks to advance UP Diliman (UPD) to the forefront of artistic and cultural engagement in the country by providing its artists, cultural workers, and scholars with rich and varied spaces and opportunities to realize their full potentials while enriching the artistic and cultural experience of the UPD community and beyond.

OICA was created by the UP Board of Regents in March 1999 to formulate policies, guidelines, plans and programs on artistic and cultural activities for UPD.

As such, it is envisioned to systematize programs towards the development of medium- and long-term plans for culture and the arts, in the context of UPD's mission and vision. It is likewise tasked to create and sustain domestic and international art and linkages and generate additional funds to sustain its programs.



Appendices

Table 20. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Facebook network

	QUARTER 1		QUARTER 2		QUARTER 3		QUARTER 4	
Period	May-July 2021		Aug-Oct 2021		Nov 2021- Jan 2022		Feb 2022 - May 2022	
Twitter Accounts	37,936		58, 654		60,091		56, 998	
Interactional connections	134,130		274,393		137,758		375, 449	
Network density	0		0		0		0	
Structure	Segmented center with two outer rings of small groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented but denser center with two outer rings of small groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented and loose wherein one cluster is relatively isolated, and with two outer rings of groups extending content to the fringes of the network		Segmented but denser center	
Major clusters	Ten		Six		Eight		Eight	
Percentage of network	72.17%		75.27%		30.36%		85.05%	
	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics	Top actors	Pertinent topics
Cluster 1	Moreno-Ong aligned accounts and FB news & political pages (16.71%)		News media and FB accounts aligned with Marcos, Sara Duterte, Bong Go & Rodrigo Duterte (21.26%)		Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte-aligned accounts (11%)		Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte-aligned accounts (29.21%)	
	<p>Top sources: Iskomorenodomagoso Erwintulforeal DocWillieOngOfficial Alanpetercayetano DocLizaOng</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): Puso ng Maynila SAN JOSE DEL MONTE BULACAN NETIZENS ISKOnatics (Isko Moreno Advocates) YORME ISKO MORENO for PRESIDENT 2022 MOVEMENT DocLizaRamosoOng</p>	<p>Moreno's stance on various socio-political issues</p> <p>Moreno's platform on 'cleaning up' the government Doc Ong's medical advice and tips for common ailments</p>	<p>Top sources: News5Everywhere BongbongMarcos SMNINews Atty.LarryGadon2022 Manilbulletin</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): PRO-GOVERNMENT (G) PROTECT THE PRESIDENT DUTERTE (G) PRESIDENT BONGBONG MARCOS 2022 (G) News5Everywhere TEAMBBM2022-KSA (G)</p>	<p>Attacks vs other presidentiables Robredo, Moreno and Pacquiao Expressions of support for Marcos, Duterte, Bong Go and Sara Duterte Anti-media sentiment which implies bias in coverage</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): manilbulletin MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official BongbongMarcos SMNINews junriellandervlogs</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS BBM2022 Supporters Group BBM Supporters Batangas Chapter PH Ala Eh BBM kami BBM SUPPORTERS CAVITE</p>	<p>BBM disqualification case and the tirades between COMELEC commissioners SMNI news of Robredo and Marcos' stance on NTF-ELCAC and on communist groups Marcos-Duterte caravans, primarily volunteer groups invoking the promise of Bagong Lipunan</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): BongbongMarcos uniteamofficial MayorIndaySaraDuterte Official AlvinTvCares junriellandervlogs</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): President BBM United PH BONGBONG MARCOS SULONG PILIPINAS KBL-BBM-SARA UNITEAM (KILUSANG BAGONG LIPUNAN) BBM SARA Uniteam Supporters The PATRIOT</p>	<p>Content defending Marcos Jr. regarding their family's estate tax issue Negative campaign against Robredo, including linking her with CPP-NPA-NDF Discussions about the anticipated landslide victory of Marcos-Duterte tandem</p>

	Government and local media and FB accounts aligned with Bong Go, Sara Duterte & Rodrigo Duterte (15.86%)		Moreno, Lacson, and Rodrigo Duterte official and aligned accounts (19.60%)		Robredo-aligned accounts with some private mainstream news media (6.67%)		Robredo-aligned accounts with some private mainstream news media (19.5%)	
<p>Cluster 2</p>	<p>Top sources: SMNI News BongGoPage SaraDuterteForPresident Movement Dxrd711davao PTVph</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): DR JAC & GEN PARLADE MOVEMENT FOR PEACE & DEVELOPMENT PROTECT THE PRESIDENT DUTERTE PHILIPPINE FEDERAL MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL Solid Duterte Supporters Worldwide Bong Go for President 2022</p>	<p>Inflammatory attacks against other presidentiables, opposition personalities, CPP-NPA, and Joma Sison by known Duterte-allied personalities Duterte's legacy projects such as (War on drugs, Build build build) and his defense of issues (West PH Sea) Sara Duterte's early lead in the Pulse Asia survey</p>	<p>Top sources: Iskomorenodomago so Positibong Progreso para sa Pilipino Halalan 2022 Sa PCSO Go Na Tayo Partidoreporma</p> <p>Top linkers (All groups): Isko Moreno Domagoso News YORME ISKO MORENO for PRESIDENT 2022 MOVEMENT Marcos - Duterte Solid Supporters FORTUNE DAILY NEWS PING LACSON FOR PRESIDENT MOVEMENT</p>	<p>Expressions of support for Moreno and features of his projects in Manila News about Lacson-Sotto filing of COC, and some expressions of support for the tandem Criticisms of Pacquiao, Marcos and De Lima</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): VPLeniRobredoPH rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet abscbnNEWS PhilippineSTAR</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): ABL - Angat Buhay Lahat Nationalists for Leni-Kiko Kay Leni at Kiko Tayo Leni for President Movement VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends</p>	<p>Conversations around Jessica Soho presidential interviews where Marcos Jr. declined invitation Robredo supporters' posts about their volunteer-driven grassroots campaign initiatives Fact-check posts by Robredo's supporters on Marcos campaign's false claims</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): VPLeniRobredoPH News5Everywhere rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet PhilippineSTAR</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): ABL - Angat Buhay Lahat Leni Angat Buhay Pilipinas Angat Buhay Foundation ANGAT BUHAY ADVOCATES LENI- Let's Empower Nationalist Individuals</p>	<p>Content highlighting the authenticity of Leni Robredo Posts containing sarcastic and humorous attack against BBM camp Praises about celebrities and public figures vocal in their support for Leni-Kiko tandem</p>

	Privately owned mainstream news media and Robredo & opposition-aligned accounts (14.11%)	Pacquiao aligned accounts and boxing and gaming-related pages(16.99%)	Lacson aligned accounts with private mainstream media and content creators (3.42%)	Non-political accounts (16.72%)
<p>Cluster 3</p>	<p>Top sources: News5Everywhere RobredoParaSaPilipino VPLeniRobredoPH Rapplerdotcom abscbnNEWS</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022 News5Everywhere "LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL) OPINYONG TUNAY</p> <p>Passing of PNoy Features of VP Robredo's official visits all over the Philippines and provincial groups pushing for Robredo's candidacy Criticisms of Duterte administration: 'Jet ski' and Spratly islands, VFA, Vaccination, Troll farms</p>	<p>Top sources: PBConFOX MannyPacquiao MagicStoneGaming TestaGaming MannyPacquiaoPublicInformation</p> <p>Top linkers (All groups): Manny Pacquiao for President Movement (official) Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters BOXING PHILIPPINES The Corner: PBC on FOX BOXING TALK PILIPINAS</p> <p>Pacquiao's retirement from boxing Pacquiao as the standard bearer of Pimentel PDP-Labang wing Criticisms against Duterte, Go, Moreno, Marcos and Trillanes</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): tribunephil gmapublicaffairs MikeDefensorWinnie Castelo dzmmteledadyo PINGLACSONSUPPORTERS</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): tribunephil cnc.tribunephilpolitics.com.ph radyobanderailoilo dzmmteledadyo</p> <p>Discussions about issues on China and West Philippine Sea News about COMELEC's preparation on the nearing elections Statements of support towards the Lacson-Sotto tandem</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): thechroniclephilippines QuestionMark21 davaosecretblog MagicStoneGaming TangabelsOfficial FilipinasSecretFiles</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): Online Kulitan davaosecretblog TangabelsOfficial FilipinasSecretFiles what if</p> <p>Postings of various products/services for sale Posts calling for respect and "oneness" as Filipinos amidst differing political views Entertainment content putting political opponents in a virtual fight</p>

	Pacquiao aligned accounts and boxing-related pages (5.51%)		Privately owned mainstream news media Robredo & opposition-aligned accounts (11.88%)		Moreno-aligned accounts (2.31%)		Moreno-aligned accounts (8.82%)	
<p>Cluster 4</p>	<p>Top sources: MannyPacquiao MannyPacquiaoPublicInformation OfficialMannyPacquiaoSupporters GODFEARINGLEADER ERTV PBConFOX</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): BOXING TALK PILIPINAS Manny Pacquiao for President Movement (official) MANNY PACQUIAO A GOD FEARING LEADER!!! Pepeng Pinakamalupet, MANNY "PAC-MAN" PACQUIAO</p>	<p>Pacquiao's side on the PDP-Laban conflict</p> <p>Sports news and fan conversations about boxing, UFC, MMA</p> <p>Praises for Parlade and his efforts to protect human rights and find solutions to conflicts</p>	<p>Top sources: Rapplerdotcom RobredoParaSaPilipino TeamleniRobredo abscbnNEWS Inquirerdotnet</p> <p>Top linkers (All groups): VP LENI ROBREDO & Friends President Leni Robredo @ VP Kiko Pangilinan Tayo 2022! Solid Pro "LENI" "LENI" ROBREDO...PARA SA PILIPINO"(ORIGINAL) Metro Manila Movement for Leni Robredo (MMMLR)</p>	<p>Voter's registration extension and filing of COCs Community mobilization of Robredo's supporters, particularly in Camarines Sur Criticisms and antipathy against Duterte, Marcos and admin personalities</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): iskomorenodomago so IskoMorenoNationalFansClub iskoakovolunteers alamnahdizz juanmanila.net</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): TROPANG ISKO MORENO ISKO MORENO DOMAGOSO For President "ISKO TAYO 2022" Isko Moreno Group PUSO ng PILIPINAS juanmanila.net</p>	<p>Slogans of support for Mayor Isko Moreno revolving around the message of him being an action man Conversations about the COMELEC's internal issues regarding Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case Moreno's accomplishments in Manila and action plans when elected president</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): iskomorenodomago so iskoakovolunteers DocWillieOngOfficial IskoMorenoNationalFansClub gonegosyoofficial</p> <p>Top linkers (groups): Isko Moreno Group SALAMAT YORME ISKO MORENO DIEHARD SUPPORTER Yorme Isko Moreno Supporters Mayor Isko Moreno For President 2022 Laguna Chapter 2019 Group ISKO MORENO FOR PRESIDENT MOVEMENT</p>	<p>Campaign promises of Isko Moreno mainly of practical and material needs</p> <p>Campaign posts for Isko Moreno, i.e. him as the better choice to defeat Marcos</p> <p>Health and medical advices re diseases and wellness by Doc Willie Ong</p>

Cluster 5	Government and NGOs engaged in election activities (4.15%)		Government and NGOs engaged in election activities (4.53%)		News media and content creators (2.06%)		Pacquiao-aligned accounts(7%)	
	<p>Top sources: Comelec.ph Koalisyon22ph ELeksyon.BotoKo BukasK nutshell.ph DepartmentOfEducation.PH</p> <p>Top linkers (all pages): nutshell.ph Koalisyon22ph comelec.ph SANJUANBalagtasBulacan SANJUANMangunaka</p>	<p>Voter's registration drive of various agencies and LGUs Users attacking Tulfo as changing his alliances, along with Akbayan, Moreno and Pacquiao Promoting government programs and policy: Kontra-droga, kontra-terrorismo, Bangsamoro transition, West PH Seas</p>	<p>Top sources: comelec.ph DepartmentOfEducation.PH Smsupermall Chrgovph Youvoteph</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): cnc.tribunephil aMang bUta hAlap bUngol bAti-on pAgkahilas [nEgOr] (G) Radyopilipinasviracatanduanes ILIGAN CITY News & Update (G) PIACentralVisayas</p>	<p>Voter's registration drive in universities and malls and voter's education campaigns Senate investigation on Pharmally Thanking Duterte for pandemic financial aid</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): News5Everywhere MgaBalitangPilipinas Radyo5PH eleksyonserye2022 real.change1000000000</p> <p>Top linkers (mostly pages): News5Everywhere Radyo5PH MgaBalitangPilipinas real.change1000000000 eleksyonserye2022</p>	<p>Comelec 2nd Division junks CoC disqualification case against Marcos Jr. Confirmation of Sara Duterte's VP candidacy and Baste Duterte running for Mayor in Davao City Robredo's answers on why public shouldn't vote for fellow candidates from Boy Abunda's Presidential Interviews</p>	<p>Top sources (mostly pages): MannyPacquiaoPublicInformation MannyPacquiao bryancabsshow OfficialMannyPacquiaoSupporters Double Win</p> <p>Top linkers (mostly groups): Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters MANNY PACQUIAO for PRESIDENT 2022 PUSO AT KAMAO MOVEMENT Manny Pacquiao for President MONARCHY A system for God fearing people</p>	<p>Calls for sign up for free housing under Sen. Manny Pacquiao and cash assistance for BBM supporters Manny Pacquiao's testimonial from rags to riches, him being a man of destiny Criticism against Marcos Jr.'s lack of moral integrity</p>

		Lacson aligned-accounts, content creators and selling pages (4.01%)	VisMin-based media and groups(1.01%)		Moreno-aligned accounts (13.46%)		Marcos Jr.-aligned vloggers (1.42%)	
Cluster 6	<p>Top sources: JesusFalcisBlog PinoyBalitaPH shierwin.estelailan o PingLacsonOfficial Angtunaynaprobin syano</p> <p>Top linkers (all group): PING LACSON FOR PRESIDENT MOVEMENT IMUS Election Updates 2022 BACOR CITY CAVITE PHILIPPINES WATCH PinoyBalitaPH UNITED OFW'S IN JAPAN</p>	<p>Lacson rejects 1SAMBAYAN nomination Lacson's projects and issues: Virulogy institute, stance vs overpricing of vaccines Criticisms of bloggers over government propaganda and fake news</p>	<p>Top sources: LanaoDelNorteWorldWideNetwork DYINBomboRadyo Kalibo BNFMCotabato BNB News Online & Public Affairs Okpartylist</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): LanaoDelNorteWorldWideNetwork SultanNagaDimaporoWorldWideNetwork work DSWD, DOLE and others UnOfficial Updates (G) ABS-CBN KAPAMILYA SOLID SUPPORTERS WORLDWIDE (G) The Hungry Syrian Wanderer SOLID SUPPORTERS WORLDWIDE (G)</p>	<p>News related to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and Marawi rehabilitation Expressions of support for Duterte, Marcos and Sara Duterte Lanao Del Norte youth calling for medical support and benefit distribution for frontliners</p>	<p>Top sources: MannyPacquiao Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters Manny Pacquiao Public Information 91.1PacmanRadio Gensan maypagasa.sargen2022</p> <p>Top linkers (mix): Official Manny Pacquiao Supporters Manny Pacquiao for President Movement (official) dyfmBOMBOILOILO RadyoBanderaRoxas100.9FM MANNY PACQUIAO for PRESIDENT 2022</p>	<p>Pacquiao's appeal to fellow candidates regarding Typhoon Odette relief operations, partnership with the OVP Reports on the alleged data breach in COMELEC servers, mostly from regional news media outlets like Radyo Bandera Roxas Bombo Radyo Iloilo reports regarding regional and national happenings such as the COMELEC gun ban and checkpoint</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): Facebook group: Philippine History & Current Events Mel and gums Dongyu27 Facebook group: SANDRO MARCOS ONLY [SMO] JhazTechVLOGS</p> <p>Top linkers (mix): Philippine History & Current Events PINOY VLOGGER Small Youtubers SubtoSub YouTube Subscribers [Philippines] Small YouTubers PHPH Bisayang Vlogger</p>	<p>Vlogs expressing support for uniteam, ownership of their identity as supporters Content highlighting BBM-Leni dichotomy: battle of supporters Posts of OFW community supporting uniteam and informative posts about OFW absentee voting</p>

	<p>Marcos Jr.-aligned accounts (3.70%)</p>		<p>PNP-related accounts and regional news media (1.46%)</p>	<p>Lacson-aligned accounts (1.39%)</p>
<p>Cluster 7</p>	<p>Top sources: BongbongMarcos PresidentBBM Atty.LarryGadon2022 KabataangBongbongMarcos TUNAYNAKasaysayan</p> <p>Historical revisionist narratives: Maharlika nation, conspiratorial cover-up vs Marcoses, 'Unheard truth', rationalization of martial law Anti-elite sentiment (Elitista, naghaharing uri) Attacks against the Aquinos, Robredo, and communist groups</p> <p>Top linkers (all groups): TEAMBBM2022-KSA Bongbong Marcos-Imee Marcos sa 2022 Tunay na walang bahid Dilaw Bongbong Marcos for President 2022 BBM FOR PRESIDENT 2022..PINOY TAYO, MACOY TAYO!!!</p>		<p>Top sources (pages): RPCADU RPCADU3 comelec.ph PNPKakampiMo PNP.TagapagUgnay</p> <p>Local and national news about COVID-19 and Sara Duterte's withdrawal from Davao mayoral race Government news and information agencies reporting about the elections and Duterte's schedules Police stations reporting about the COMELEC checkpoints throughout the country and other election related matters.</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): dyrb540.radyopilipino dwrn657.radyopilipino DipologCityPolice Station dxgs765.radyopilipino balermeps1021</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): PingLacsonOfficial politics.com.ph Mindanao Movement for Tito Sotto 2022 Ping4President2022 abantenews</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): BLUE MOVERS FOR PING LACSON PING LACSON PING LACSON: ANG TAMA IPAGLABAN; ANG MALI, LABANAN Ping Lacson 2022 IMUS Election Updates 2022</p> <p>Lacson's campaign with message of integrity, competence and courage Content defending Lacson from issues such as Dacer-Corbito double murder case Posts highlighting Lacson's integrity over Marcos</p>

Cluster 8	Gaming content creators and tabloid news media (3.52%)				Robredo, the opposition and opposition-aligned accounts (1.38%)		Defensor-aligned accounts and Quezon City-based accounts(1.02%)	
	<p>Top sources: MagicStoneGaming TestaGaming jomermercado.blogspot Angelo Gaming TitoChogzTV JagzGaming</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): Abantenews Support PH Streamers (G) RadyoTabloidista Axie Infinity Scholarships (G) MannyPacquiaoSupportersOfficial</p>	<p>Amplifying Pacquiao's outreach efforts Responses to Pacquiao's detractors (Quiboloy, Singson, Padilla) Criticisms of admin's inability to solve the issues of the pandemic, ICC case and West PH Sea</p>			<p>Top sources (pages): RobredoParaSaPilipino theworkingopposition VisayasForLeni MasbateForMamaLeni ROmblon4LeniRobredo</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): Leni Robredo Para sa Pilipino LENI ROBREDO....PARA SA PILIPINO(ORIGINAL) Ka Barangay ni VP Leni The PATRIOT WE WILL STAND #WITH SENATOR DELIMA Solid Pro "LENI" PH</p>	<p>Praising Robredo's rapid response and relief distribution for Typhoon Odette, as well as highlighting achievements and projects Criticizing and making fun of Marcos Jr.'s no show in disqualification hearing and debates Robredo and opposition aligned accounts campaigning for Leni-Kiko and senatorial slate.</p>	<p>Top sources (pages): MalayangQC QuezonCityMikeDefensor MikeDefensorWinieCastelo FilipinoMikeDefensor or SaraforVPDigongforSenator</p> <p>Top linkers (pages): Novaliches Quezon City taga dito ako,, buy and sell Quezon city, Fairview, Caloocan Buy and sell Quezon City Buy and Sell public groups CALOOCAN NORTH/ QUEZON CITY BUY AND SELL</p>	<p>Posts against Leni Robredo, Joy Belmonte, Gian Sotto Criticism against Quezon City government by BBM-Sara-Defensor supporters Posts about Mike Defensor as the next mayor of QC</p>

Cluster 9	NTF-ELCAC, PNP and PIA pages (3.24%)							
	<p>Top sources: Ntfelcac GeneralEleazar pnp.pio pia.gov.ph PIACentralVisayas</p> <p>Top linkers (all pages): PIACaraga PIA5Catanduanes pia.gov.ph PIACentralVisayas piaregion8</p>	<p>Amplifying Bong Go's projects and appearances nationwide Duterte's legacy projects on health, education and peace and order Promotion of PNP and AFP anti-insurgency activities</p>						
Cluster 10	GoPhilippines pages (1.36%)							
	<p>Top sources: GoPhilippinesdotcom GoGeneralSantos GoLeytePH GoDavaoPH MonMonGuicolll</p> <p>Top linkers (Mixed): Taga-Quezon Province Ako (G) GoPhilippinesdotcom gobatangas gorizal gobulacan</p>	<p>National headlines: Hidilyn Diaz' Olympic win, vaccine roll-out in the provinces, face shield policy, sovereignty defense vs ICC case of Duterte User expressions of support for Moreno, Go and Parlade Local news and project features of LGUs</p>						

Table 31. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections Twitter network

	Q1 May to July 2021		Q2 Aug to Oct 2021		Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022		Q4 Feb to May 2022	
	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics
Cluster 1	Diokno official account and ordinary user accounts (25.23%)		Privately owned mainstream news media and their audiences (32.15%)		Entertainment media and Robredo-aligned ordinary user accounts (33.95%)		CNN Philippines and Robredo-aligned ordinary user accounts(29.84%)	
	cheldiokno sirrenzaavedra paopangs sunwon28 markgeronimo_	- Amplifying Robredo's projects during the pandemic -Diokno's credentials and stance on different political issues -Calls to vote critically and responsibly	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet abscbnnews maracepeda cnnphilippines	- Filing of certificate of candidacies (COCs) - Coverage of Pharmally issue -Reactions towards the official announcements of candidacies	lgreen66 netflix_ph iwantfc showtime dogwoof	-Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case and former COMELEC commissioner Rowena Guanzon's vote to disqualify him -Ranking of the presidential aspirants' performance during the Jessica Soho Presidential Debates -Rationalizing why the people should vote for Robredo	cnnphilippines gideonlasco kcbrierinq itsjuliolegaspi 13thfool	-Statements of support for Robredo, Pangilinan, and their allies -Partial and unofficial election results from the COMELEC server -Election discrepancies
Cluster 2	The opposition, their supporters and detractors (10.30%)		Pacquiao official account, boxing related accounts, and their audiences (12.16%)		Privately owned mainstream news media,Robredo-aligned accounts, and their audiences (28.9%)		Privately owned mainstream news media, Robredo official account and their audiences (23.75%)	
	1sambayan lenirobredo manilabulletin ogie_rosa pinoyakoblog	-General reminders to register for the elections -Attacks against known members of the opposition and politicians linked to 1SAMBAYAN -Support towards Robredo	mannyacquiao sportscenter bleacherreport espn real_clocktower	-Pacquiao's boxing-related activities - Reactions to the alleged social distancing violations by Pacquiao in his Batangas visit	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet philstarnews maracepeda manilabulletin	-Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case, pending petitions against his presidential candidacy, and COMELEC's decision -Calls to disqualify BBM from Presidential race -Ambiguous accounts questioning mainstream news media's credibility in defense of the Marcoses	rapplerdotcom inquirerdotnet maracepeda abscbnnews lenirobredo	-Reports on the Robredo-Pangilinan campaign -Fact-check reports on Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte -Partial and unofficial election results via the COMELEC server -Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte not joining the COMELEC debates
Cluster 3	ABS-CBN news and their audiences (9.58%)		Philippine Star and ordinary user accounts (11.58%)		Marcos Jr. official account, news media, and Marcos Jr./Duterte aligned accounts (9.68%)		Marcos Jr. official account, Marcos Jr./ Duterte aligned accounts, and news media (8.81%)	
	abscbnnews analerts mikenavallo katrinadomingo inareformina	-PDP-Laban internal dispute -COMELEC-related news and updates about the elections as reported by ABS-CBN -Reportage about release of senatorial line-ups, tandems, and alliances	philippinestar onenewsph ptrckncpt lasang_ blueboytentpack	-Filing of certificates of candidacies (COCs) -Marcos Jr.'s drug test results -Reminders to register to vote for the elections	bongbongmarcos news5ph smnnews kimindar lakasngtimog	-Marcos Jr. supporters' call for clean elections in lieu of COMELEC voter information leak -Tirades against the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem, their campaign, and their supporters -Resharing of Marcos Jr.-Duterte aligned hyperpartisan videos from Youtube	philippinestar manilabulletin bongbongmarcos smnnews kimindar	-Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte's grand rallies in Visayas in Mindanao, mainly the Cebu rally -Supporters confident in Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte's "sure win" in the elections -Marcos Jr-Duterte supporters attacking the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem and media institutions like Rappler

	Rappler and their audiences (7.34%)		Marcos Jr. official account, Marcos Jr./Duterte-aligned accounts, mainstream news media, and their audiences (9.14%)		Colmenares and Elago official accounts, socially progressive groups and activists (7.73%)		COMELEC, Robredo-aligned accounts, and their audiences (5.88%)	
Cluster 4	<p>rapplerdotcom maracepeda kevinkalbo phvote krizzy_kalerqui</p>	<p>-Rappler's reportage of Duterte and the SONA -News reports about different candidates' movements -Crowdsourcing efforts related to people's experiences related to election registration</p>	<p>bongbongmarcos lakasngtimog smnineews youtube ptvph</p>	<p>- Statements of support for Marcos Jr. -Resharing of Marcos Jr.'s vlog contents from Youtube -Media updates related to the IATF</p>	<p>colmenaresph sarahelago rosereyde eicvsfascism jcrwyn</p>	<p>- Anti-Duterte and anti-Marcos sentiments -Standing in solidarity with Rowena Guanzon - LFS protest calling for accountability from Duterte administration and the disqualification of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte</p>	<p>comelec jabjimenez lawyersforleni pinoyakoblog baryrgutierrez3</p>	<p>-COMELEC and their lack of action and response on issues and anomalies during election day -Commentaries about the COMELEC debate, -Marcos Jr. aligned accounts spamming Robredo-related hashtags with attacks on Robredo and allies</p>
	Privately owned mainstream news media and their audiences (7.30%)		Robredo, Pangilinan, and Moreno official accounts, Robredo-aligned accounts, and COMELEC (9.07%)		COMELEC, GMA News, and their audiences (7.06%)		De Guzman, Bello, and Labog official accounts, and socially progressive groups and activists (3.96%)	
Cluster 5	<p>inquirerdotnet cnnphilippines philstarnews news5ph philippinestar</p>	<p>-Senatorial line-ups -PDP-Laban internal dispute -Duterte's last SONA</p>	<p>lenirobredo iskomoreno kikopangilinan comelec pinoyakoblog</p>	<p>-Individuals and groups declaring support for the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem - Attacks against Robredo and supporters - Moreno's tirades against Robredo's motivation to run for president</p>	<p>comelec rowena_guanzon gmanews jabjimenez joseph_morong</p>	<p>-Tirades against Robredo, her campaign, her supporters, and Rowena Guanzon -Jessica Soho's Presidential debates and Boy Abunda's One-on-One interviews -Updates on Robredo's campaign agenda</p>	<p>kabonglabog eicvsfascism leodymanggagawa waldenbello jauhnetienne</p>	<p>-Reports about the De Guzman-Bello campaign, as well as their stances. -Show of support for progressive candidates and partylists - Criticism against Moreno due to his actions and continuous tirades against Robredo</p>

Cluster 6	Pacquiao official account and boxing related accounts (6.28%)		De Guzman and Bello official accounts, socially progressives, and university-based organizations (6.35%)		ABS-CBN News and candidates (5.24%)		GMA News, candidates, and their audiences (3.52%)	
	mannypacquiao espringside youtube michaelbensonn pbconfox	-Pacquiao's boxing-related activities - Rodrigo Duterte's tirades against Pacquiao	leodymanggagawa bahaghari_ph ajay_lagrimas waldenbello ust_csc	-Calls for a safe return to schools -Calls to unite and condemn human rights violations and NTF ELCAC-related issues -Hyperlocal election related updates (district- and school-level elections)	absbnnews sotto_tito iampinglacson ancalerts inareformina	-COMELEC's decision for Marcos Jr.'s disqualification case -Boy Abunda's interviews and Jessica Soho's Presidential Debates -Lacson supporters campaigning for him	gmanews sotto_tito iampinglacson piaranada iskomoreno	-Reports on Lacson-Sotto, Moreno-Ong, Pacquiao-Atienza campaign and miting de avance -Attacks towards the Marcos Jr.-Sara Duterte tandem -Support towards the Moreno-Ong tandem along with their senatorial slate
Cluster 7	International news media (4.11%)		International news media (3.16%)				Entertainment media, entertainment personalities and their supporters (1.59%)	
	afp washingtonpost business cnni ajenglish	-Rodrigo Duterte's threats against individuals refusing to be vaccinated - ICC investigation on Duterte's war on drugs - Manny Pacquiao's boxing fight against Errol Spence	reuters ap ajenglish bbcworld donlew87	- Filing of certificates of candidacies (COCs) -Rodrigo Duterte's political plans - Pacquiao's retirement from boxing			migueldumaul donnypangilinan donatorsph bellemariano02 phtvandfilmupd	-Catriona Gray and Pia Wurtzbach endorsing Robredo -Donny Pangilinan and Belle Mariano campaigning for the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem -Robredo and Pangilinan leading in Google Trends
Cluster 8	Socially progressive groups and activists (3.61%)		Partido Reporma, news media, and their audiences (2.43%)				International news media (1.37%)	
	karapatan anakbayan_ph bahaghari_ph pmjamilla spotlightupd	-ICC investigation on Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs -Human rights violation during the Duterte presidency -Online rally forwarding people's condemnation of Rodrigo Duterte's inaction on issues related to the Philippine sovereignty	gmanews partidoreporma politiko_ph rrd_davao dzhnews	-COA audit of government transactions with Pharmally -Filing of certificates of candidacies (COCs)			nikkeiasia iapolls2022 ggreenwald business npr	-Marcos Jr.'s victory in the PH elections -National elections in France -Commentaries on Russian politics and US politics

	Mainstream news media and Duterte-aligned ordinary user accounts (3.60%)		Entertainment personalities and their supporters (1.85%)				Boxing related accounts(1.22%)	
Cluster 9	ptvph lakasngtimog smnnews thedoctorluck maclen315	- Duterte's SONA and other government events and projects -Name-calling and attacks against 1SAMBAYAN	hashtag_ck starmagicphils kierviteamabrod vfactorph vonarroyo	-Celebrities filing certificates of candidacy -Entertainment personalities sharing insights about the elections -Star Magic online campaign to encourage voters to register			mightymaxboxing trboxing ezuiequotes espringside terrible100	- Joint presscon by the other candidates led by Moreno, Lacson, and Gonzales - Conversations about Manny Pacquiao's boxing legacy and his rivalry with Floyd Mayweather Jr.
	GMA News,government agencies, and their audiences (2.52%)							
Cluster 10	ptvph lakasngtimog smnnews thedoctorluck maclen315	- Duterte's SONA and other government events and projects -Name-calling and attacks against 1SAMBAYAN						

Table 40. Quarterly summary of communities and key topics in the 2022 Philippine General Elections YouTube network

	Q1 May to July 2021		Q2 Aug to Oct 2021		Q3 Nov 2021 to Jan 2022		Q4 Feb to May 2022	
	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics	Top actors	Key topics
Cluster 1	Private mainstream news media (32.05%)		Private mainstream news media (27.72%)		News media, entertainment personalities and Marcos Jr./Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (28.56%)		Informational channels (18.3%)	
	<p>ABS-CBN News GMA News ANC 24/7 Rappler CNN Philippines</p>	<p>Prospective presidential, vice presidential candidacy, party nominations, tandems, alliances, and factions.</p>	<p>ANC 24/7 ABS-CBN News Rappler GMA News CNN Philippines</p>	<p>COC filing and substitutions of standard bearers of electoral candidates. Criticisms on the use of placeholder candidates Extension of deadline for voter registration</p>	<p>PTV SMNI News The Boy Abunda Talk Channel Toni Gonzaga Studio Sangkay Janjan TV</p>	<p>Comparison between Marcos Jr. vs. Robredo, Boy Abunda interviews vs. Jessica Soho interviews, and SMNI news presidential debates vs. presidential debates hosted by other news media organizations Absolving Marcos Jr. from his tax evasion case and and criticisms against him. Commending Marcos Jr. for his accomplishments and performance on his interviews and debates</p>	<p>LENZCHI OFFICIAL wildtv oreg INFORMATIO N TV EDUCATIONA L CH.1 comelectv SENYOR JHOEY- TITSER EXPLORER NG QUEZON CITY</p>	<p>Tutorials on operating VCMs Honorarium and salary increase of teachers for their service in 2022 elections Partial and unofficial results of 2022 PH Elections</p>
Cluster 2	Religious-affiliated media, state-owned media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (26.35%)		Educational institutions and informational channels (18.76%)		International news media (27.40%)		News and entertainment media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte hyper-partisan channels (17.41%)	
	<p>SMNI News RTVMalacanang KaCoffee BANAT NEWS TV JUST in BALITA</p>	<p>Partisan attacks against presumed presidential candidates and opposition leaders. Prospective tandem of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte</p>	<p>TVUP Ateneo School of Government [ASOG] Lourdes College Participate PH FINEX Philippines</p>	<p>Voting registration information Preparations for Philippine elections amidst COVID-19</p>	<p>Bioy Ajijul TVUP Kuya PadzWhin ETv. Glenn Santander NBC News</p>	<p>Full speech of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte on their campaign rallies Candidacy of Padilla and his association with the Dutertes International news affairs</p>	<p>SMNI News The Boy Abunda Talk Channel NET 25 Sangkay Janjan TV PH Latest</p>	<p>Comparison of Marcos Jr. to other presidential candidates Survey reports with Marcos Jr. as the frontrunner in presidential polls Allegations against Robredo for committing electoral fraud to win over Marcos Jr.</p>
Cluster 3	Private mainstream media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (20.18%)		News media and Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyper-partisan channels (14.00%)		Private mainstream news media (25.45%)		International news (17.05%)	
	<p>News5Everywhere Walk The Talk PH Kapeng Barako Vlog ASEAN Analytics Manila Bulletin Online</p>	<p>Pulse Asia survey results with Sara Duterte as the frontrunner in VP polls Marcos Jr. supporting the Duterte administration</p>	<p>UNTV News and Rescue SMNI News Maharlika RTVMalacanang PTV</p>	<p>Partisan attacks against presidential contenders of Marcos Jr., opposition leaders, and administration critics. Rodrigo Duterte-aligned influencers criticizing and disparaging Marcos Jr. Defense of issues against Sara Duterte on VP-run and Marcos Jr.'s tax evasion case</p>	<p>ABS-CBN News ANC 24/7 UNTV News and Rescue Rappler GMA News</p>	<p>Political analysts discussing campaign strategies and presidential debates On-ground campaign and interviews of Lacson and Sotto tandem Confirmation of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte tandem and withdrawal of Go and Rodrigo Duterte tandem for Presidency and VP</p>	<p>WION ABS-CBN Entertainment Al Jazeera English CNA DW News</p>	<p>Anticipation of the landslide victory of Marcos Jr. in PH elections Elections on the various parts of the world</p>

Cluster 4	Entertainment personalities and media (11.09%)		Marcos Jr. official channel, entertainment personalities, and Marcos Jr.-aligned hyper-partisan channels (13.01%)		Marcos Jr./S.Duterte-aligned hyperpartisan channels (5.98%)		State-owned and privately owned mainstream news media (13.27%)	
	<p>ABS-CBN Entertainment</p> <p>Ogie Diaz</p> <p>Celestine Gonzaga-Soriano</p> <p>Alex Gonzaga Official</p> <p>Timeless Jaydz</p>	<p>Entertainment shows and vlogs featuring presumed presential candidates</p>	<p>Bongbong Marcos</p> <p>Tune In Kay Tunying</p> <p>Filipino Future</p> <p>Toni Gonzaga Studio</p> <p>TicTALK with Aster Amoyo</p>	<p>Survey results with Marcos Jr. as the frontrunner in presidential polls</p> <p>Historical revisionism during Marcos Sr. regime, Marcos family affairs, and attacks against the Aquinos</p> <p>Achievements of Marcos Jr. and his vision for the Philippines</p>	<p>Erica Agner</p> <p>Kaputol Soy Vlogs</p> <p>SPLAT</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>Vincent Tabigue</p> <p>Euphoniaco TV</p>	<p>'Kalye surveys' for presidential, vice presidential, and mayoral candidates and its reports claiming a landslide victory of Marcos Jr.</p>	<p>PTV News5</p> <p>Everywhere Team</p> <p>Pacquiao</p> <p>Raffy Tulfo in Action</p> <p>TV5</p> <p>InterAksyon</p>	<p>Marcos Jr. attending the SMNI presidential debate</p> <p>COMELEC presidential debates announcement and guidelines</p> <p>Vote count watch results</p>
Cluster 5	Pacquiao official channel, Pacquiao-aligned channels, and channels featuring PNP Chief Eleazar (4.78%)		Marcos Jr./S. Duterte aligned hyper-partisan channels (11.23%)		Robredo/Pangilinan-aligned channels (3.03%)		Privately owned mainstream news media (9.4%)	
	<p>Team Pacquiao</p> <p>AJ Buena Vlogs</p> <p>The FILIPINO GENEALOGY Channel</p> <p>I am Russel</p> <p>FightHype.com</p>	<p>Behind-the-scenes training and past or upcoming matches footages of Pacquiao</p> <p>Nationwide inspections on police precincts of Former PNP Chief Guillermo Eleazar</p>	<p>Vincent Tabigue</p> <p>TROPANG BISAYA</p> <p>ALJERE VLOG</p> <p>Euphoniaco TV</p> <p>PweDelie TV</p>	<p>Kalye surveys' and its results claiming a landslide victory of Marcos Jr.</p> <p>Partisan attacks against Robredo and Moreno</p>	<p>Anthony Comedia</p> <p>Carl Veluz</p> <p>Ava Max</p> <p>Richcess Taste</p> <p>Mommy L</p>	<p>Robredo and Pangilinan supporters initiating relief goods distribution and campaign caravans in Philippines and cities abroad</p> <p>Robredo and Pangilinan being prayed over by nuns and priests from Ilo-ilo</p> <p>Robredo and Pangilinan campaign jingle</p>	<p>Rappler</p> <p>GMA News</p> <p>ABS-CBN News</p> <p>ANC 24/7</p> <p>UNTV News and Rescue</p>	<p>DQ case ruling on the tax evasion xcse of Marcos Jr.</p> <p>Absence of Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte on COMELEC debates</p> <p>Calls for withdrawal of Robredo as instigated by Moreno</p> <p>Preparation of COMELEC for the elections</p> <p>Political analysts discussing election results</p> <p>Oath-taking of the the new VP Sara Duterte</p>
Cluster 6			Mainstream news media and Moreno aligned hyperpartisan channels (8.17%)		PNP-AFP channels (2.86%)		OFW vloggers (7.98%)	
			<p>GMA Public Affairs</p> <p>Pinas News</p> <p>Karen Davila</p> <p>Batang</p> <p>Maynila Media</p> <p>ABS-CBN Entertainment</p>	<p>Entertainment shows featuring presidential candidates</p> <p>Testimonials on Moreno's character, his projects in Manila, and competency to run the country</p> <p>Shifting of support from Pacquiao to Moreno</p>	<p>pm magz channel</p> <p>PULIS AT MAMAMAYAN</p> <p>ROMEL</p> <p>PHOTOGRAPHY (DAVAO CITY)</p> <p>Mamang Police</p>	<p>PNP requirements, qualifications, and recruitment process</p> <p>PNP interview questions and criminology board and NAPOLCOM exam reviewer</p>	<p>Alvin Alvz</p> <p>LEBIB FAMILY</p> <p>Alex Gonzaga Official</p> <p>Aljen Vlogs</p> <p>Catlea Vlogs</p>	<p>Instruction or tutorials about overseas voting registration in Saudi Arabia</p> <p>Presidential election surveys in Dubai</p> <p>Vlogs of OFWs in Dubai</p>

Cluster 7						News and entertainment personalities and vloggers (5%)	
						<p>One News PH</p> <p>Ogie Diaz</p> <p>Aiko</p> <p>Melendez</p> <p>Karen Davila</p> <p>RICHARD HEYDARIAN</p> <p>VLOG</p>	<p>Political discussion on Marcos Jr.'s ill-gotten wealth and disinformation arm</p> <p>Lifestyle, showbiz, tarot/horoscope readingvlogs</p> <p>Robredo-Pangilinan thanksgiving rally vlogs</p> <p>Espiritu vs. Gadon on senatorial debate</p>
Cluster 8						Political opinion, webinars, and gaming & sports (2.91%)	
						<p>TVUP</p> <p>Patriotico PH</p> <p>Don't Hug Me. Im Scared</p> <p>LDShadowLady</p> <p>Dude Perfect</p>	<p>Sample ballot for elections and election results in South Cotabato</p> <p>Webinars hosted by TVUP and UPB System</p>
Cluster 9						PNP-AFP-aligned channels (2.42%)	
						<p>GOOD News Philippines</p> <p>PNP PIO</p> <p>LaCar</p> <p>DA-REAL</p> <p>Military Channel</p> <p>Literacy Corner</p>	<p>Commencement exercises of PMA</p> <p>Turning over of equipments to PNP</p>
Cluster 10						Religious content channels (1.91%)	
						<p>Vince Arapan</p> <p>Paulines</p> <p>MultiMedia PH</p> <p>Morena</p> <p>Zoub USA</p> <p>InvestaTV</p> <p>Marvin</p> <p>Germo</p>	<p>Prayer and mass offering for 2022 PH elections</p> <p>Explainers on public administration and government departments</p>