Behavioural Biases and Identity in Social Media:
The Case of Philippine Populism, President Duterte's Rise, and Ways Forward

"Ownership is not limited to material things. It can also apply to points of view. Once we take ownership of an idea—whether it's about politics or sports—what do we do? We love it perhaps more than we should. We prize it more than it is worth. And most frequently, we have trouble letting go of it because we can't stand the idea of its loss. What are we left with then? An ideology—rigid and unyielding."[1]

— Dan Ariely, Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions

Introduction

After what seemed the most vicious elections in Philippine history, Rodrigo Duterte emerged victorious during the 2016 Presidential Elections, with 16 million votes—nearly 7 million more than his closest rival from the Liberal Party.

Due to public dissatisfaction over decades of poverty, Filipinos clamoured for radical change and Duterte was the answer. Duterte was able to tap into Filipinos' deep frustration with the status quo, which he effectively framed as the fault of the elite "dilawan" (yellow/Liberal Party). His appeal to the common Filipino rested on his ability to embody and connect with Filipino identities, while also appealing somewhat paradoxically to a conservative, patriarchal society. Social media provided him with a potent stage to connect with voters and capitalize on amplified behavioural biases online.

Scope of the Case Study

The case study examines behavioural biases and concepts of identity that were prevalent in social media during the 2016 elections, which catapulted President Duterte into power, and still persist in Philippine society today. Behavioural biases are defined as systematic errors of intuitive thought.[2] Identity refers to forms of individual and collective characteristics that people intrinsically possess and extrinsically relate to in society such as beliefs, sense of dignity, nationality, language, and shared values.[3]

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[1] Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 137-38.

[2] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 7.

[3] Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2018), 9 and 63.

The analysis focuses on the Duterte campaign on Facebook and identifies how the platform acted as an amplifier for users' 'fast-thinking'[4] or automatic and intuitive thinking, bounded rationality[5] or rationality based on limited information, time, and capacity, and individual and group biases. By identifying behavioural insights, the analysis seeks to provide clarity on how Duterte as a politician and his campaign effectively connected with people, influenced decision making, and formed beliefs.

Readers are urged to examine elections and populism with a behavioural lens to understand the effects of social media and how it has been used both effectively and maliciously. Subsequently, readers can reflect on what public institutions, communities, and individuals can do to uphold values of truth, integrity, and compassion. It is especially urgent to do so at a time when powerful technological platforms such as Facebook have proven their ability to trigger and influence massive shifts in society.

Background

Duterte's Late Candidacy and Campaign Beginnings

Even before his official candidacy, Duterte had already amassed significant figures in national election surveys (Exhibit 1) with voter preference of more than 10% as early as March 2015.[6]

Exhibit 1 – Summary of Pre-Election Survey Results from December 2014 to December 2015 conducted by the Social Weather Stations[7]

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[4] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 16.

[5] James March, "Bounded Rationality, Ambiguity, and the Engineering of Choice," *Bell Journal of Economics* 9 (Autumn 1978): 587–608.

[6] "BusinessWorld-SWS December 2015 Pre-Election Survey" Social Weather Stations, December 23, 2015, https://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20160105175348.

[7] Ibid.

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On November 27, 2015, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, then Mayor of Davao City in Southern Philippines, filed his Certificate of Candidacy for the Presidency.[8] He did so more than a month after the October 16 filing deadline[9], with the support of Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban). They replaced their initial candidate and nominated him as the party's standard bearer.[10]

An early campaign video[11] showcased then Mayor Duterte's Davao City, his prized achievement and chosen home, where he was mayor for 21 years.[12] He describes Davao as a city characterized by development, order, justice, peace, and discipline, and highlighted that it was the 9th safest city in the world.[13] Davao was his proof of effective leadership. However, this widely spread and believed statistic was actually sourced from Numbeo.com, a crowdsourced database online.[14]

Often called "The Punisher"[15], as mayor, he was famous for his simplicity, tough attitude, effective governance, and zero tolerance for crime. Seemingly a prelude to the Philippine Drug War, he had allegedly established the Davao Death Squad, which performs extra-judicial killings of criminals.[16] Alleged vigilante killers have since confessed publicly during Senate hearings and confidential interviews, with one claiming to have been involved in killing 330 people for the mayor.[17]

His legitimacy as a presidential candidate stemmed from the story of Davao and how the public perceived him as a local chief executive. As he said in his early campaign video, Davao's proof of concept "can happen to the entire Philippines".[18] Through the next months in 2015 and early 2016, the Duterte campaign used various narratives, stories, and strategies that catapulted him to the top of the race. Right before election day on May 9, the last pre-election survey (Exhibit 2) indicated that Duterte was the preference of 33% of voters, a foreshadowing of the 38.6% of actual votes he received.[19]

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[8] "It's official: Duterte files COC for president", *ABS-CBN News,* November 27, 2015, https://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/11/27/15/its-official-duterte-files-coc-for-president.

[9] Michael Bueza, "Filing of candidacies of 2016 bets set for Oct 12-16", *Rappler,* March 27, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/nation/88146-coc-filing-2016-elections.

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Mayor Rodrigo Duterte Political Campaign Ad For 2016 Election?", Pinoy News Blogger, May 28, 2015, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViaVm-42PWw

[12] "Rodrigo Duterte Biography", Biography, accessed January 10, 2019, https://www.biography.com/people/rodrigo-duterte-102616

[13] Pinoy News Blogger, video, "Mayor Rodrigo Duterte Political Campaign Ad For 2016 Election?"

[14] "Davao rated 9th safest city in the world", Inquirer-Mindanao, May 10, 2015, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/690363/davao-rated-9th-safest-city-in-the-world

[15] "Rodrigo Duterte Overview", ABS-CBN News, accessed January 15, 2019, https://news.abs-cbn.com/halalan2016/candidates/rody-duterte

[16] Richard Paddok, "Becoming Duterte: The Making of a Philippine Strongman," New York Times, March 21, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-president-strongman.html

[17] John Reed, "Rodrigo Duterte and the Populist Playbook", FT.Com, Jul 26, 2018, http://libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/docview/2076587534?accountid=13876.

[18] Pinoy News Blogger, video, "Mayor Rodrigo Duterte Political Campaign Ad For 2016 Election?"

[19] "2016 Presidential Election Results | Philippines," Rappler, accessed January 15, 2019, http://ph.rappler.com/elections/2016/results/philippines/position/1/president.

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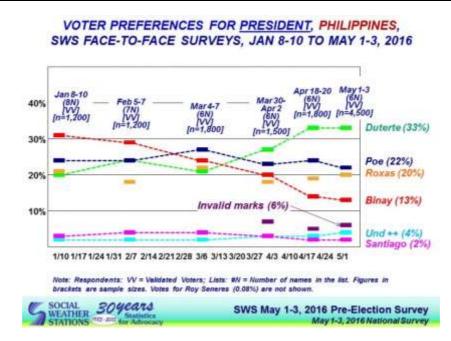*The Case of Philippine Populism, President Duterte's Rise, and Ways Forward*

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Exhibit 2 – Summary of Pre-Election Survey Results from January 2016 to May 2016 conducted by the Social Weather Stations[20]

Social Media Phenomenon

In April 2016, Facebook declared President Duterte the undisputed king of Facebook conversations during the 2016 elections and was the subject of 64% of all Philippine-election related conversations on the site.[21] The Duterte campaign dominated and baffled opposition groups. On election day, Facebook conversations that included Duterte reached 71% (Exhibit 3). The Duterte campaign's social media manager, Nic Gabunada, described the campaign as 'organic' and 'volunteer-driven', with local teams and groups abroad comprised of overseas Filipino workers.[22] He highlighted the campaign's lack of funds as inspiration to be creative—creativity that was corrupted by the proliferation of fake news, spam, bots,[23] trolls, misinformation, propaganda, harassment, and crackdowns on dissenters.[24]

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[20] "BusinessWorld-SWS May 1-3, 2016 Pre-Election Survey," Social Weather Stations, May 6, 2016, https://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20160524115053

[21] Lauren Etter, "What Happens When Government Uses Facebook as a Weapon?," Bloomberg Businessweek, December 7, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-12-07/how-rodrigo-duterte-turned-facebook-into-a-weapon-with-a-little-help-from-facebook.

[22] Jodesz Gavilan, "Duterte's P10M social media campaign: Organic, volunteer-driven," June 1, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/rich-media/134979-rodrigo-duterte-social-media-campaign-nic-gabunada

[23] Samantha Bradshaw and Philip N. Howard, "Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation," *Computational Propaganda Research Project* Working paper no. 2017.12 (July 14, 2017): 13.

[24] Sean Williams, "Rodrigo Duterte's Army of Online Trolls", The New Republic, January 4, 2017, https://newrepublic.com/article/138952/rodrigo-dutertes-army-online-trolls

Exhibit 3 – Facebook Statistics on conversations on May 9, 2016[25]

Based on a global inventory of organized social media manipulation, Duterte's social media machinery had been found to have "consistent form and strategy, involving full-time staff members who are employed year-round to control the information space".[26] The campaign's most prominent bloggers such as Mocha Uson headlined key messages, echoed by throngs of pages and accounts.

The campaign took advantage of how social media amplifies behavioural biases such as:

- *Framing Effects*[27] – the same information can evoke different emotions when presented in different ways
- *'What You See Is All There Is'* [28] – jumping to conclusions on the bases of limited evidence, characteristic of intuitive thinking
- *Saliency Bias*[29] – attractive and attention-grabbing information are more easily called to memory and can lead to overweighting of unlikely outcomes
- *Overconfidence*[30] – individuals base the confidence they have on their beliefs on the quality of what little they see, regardless of limited evidence
- *Confirmation Bias*[31] – individuals seek information that matches the beliefs they currently hold
- *Endowment Effect*[32] – a sense of ownership for something we own, an idea, or a stand

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[25] Paige Occenola, "How did the presidential and VP candidates fare on social media? ," Rappler, May 11, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/technology/social-media/132583-2016-philippine-elections-candidates-social-media-facebook-twitter

[26] Samantha Bradshaw and Philip N. Howard, "Challenging Truth and Trust: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation," *Computational Propaganda Research Project* (2018): 9.

[27] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 87.

[28] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 85.

[29] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 322.

[30] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 87.

[31] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 81.

[32] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 284.

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- *Groupthink*[33] – biases held by groups where there is evident belief in the inherent morality of a group and stereotyping and opposition of those who disagree with them
- *Tribal Rationality*[34] – individuals refer to people who are similar and behave like them when faced with decision-making with incomplete information
- *Reciprocity*[35] – a social norm that influences mutually beneficial behaviour

These worked together with strong concepts of collective identity that Duterte embodied through his rhetoric and resonated among groups of Filipino voters. Such amplified aspects of behaviour will be identified in subsequent sections for further analysis.

Free Facebook

Facebook has become a powerful weapon to influence and mislead in many parts of the world, even more so in the Philippines where users have access to Facebook for free (Exhibit 4)—without the need for data plans or Wi-Fi.[36] In partnership with telecommunications companies, Facebook launched the Internet.org initiative and has successfully done so in 32 countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, 11 countries in Asia, and 15 countries in Latin America.[37]

Only 38% of Filipinos had access to the Internet in mid-2014.[38] In March 2015, a few months before the election campaign period, Facebook's Internet.org initiative was launched in the Philippines.[39] It was the seventh country in the world and the first in Southeast Asia to experience free access, particularly to Facebook and 23 other selected websites.[40] Of its 100.98 million citizens in 2015[41], 69 million Filipinos had access to the Internet and nearly 100% had Facebook accounts.[42] An article captures Facebook's impact in the Philippines:

> *"Thanks to a social media–hungry populace and heavy subsidies that keep Facebook free to use on mobile phones, Facebook has completely saturated the country. And because using other data, like accessing a news website via a mobile web browser, is precious and expensive, for most Filipinos the only way online is through Facebook. The platform is a*

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[33] Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy. *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*. (New York: Free Press, 2012).
[34] "Tribal Rationality." The Economist (Online) (May 19, 2010). https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/docview/849702010?pq-origsite=summon
[35] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 296.
[36] Jake Swearingen, "How Facebook's Free Internet Helped Elect a Dictator," Intelligencer, September 4, 2018, http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/09/how-facebooks-free-internet-helped-elect-a-dictator.html.
[37] "Where we've launched", Internet.org by Facebook, accessed on March 1, 2019, https://info.internet.org/en/story/where-weve-launched/.
[38] Intelligencer, "How Facebook's Free Internet Helped Elect a Dictator"
[39] Judith Balea, "Facebook's Internet.org app brings free mobile internet to the Philippines," Tech in Asia, March 18, 2015, https://www.techinasia.com/facebook-internet-org-app-smart-philippines.
[40] Tech in Asia, "Facebook's Internet.org app brings free mobile internet to the Philippines"
[41] "2015 Census of Population," Philippine Statistics Authority, May 19, 2016, https://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2015-census-population
[42] Tech in Asia, "Facebook's Internet.org app brings free mobile internet to the Philippines"

> *leading provider of news and information, and it was a key engine behind the wave of populist anger that carried Duterte all the way to the presidency.*[43]

Misinformation through fake news and spam networks took advantage of Facebook algorithms, which prioritized content that had more engagement.[44] Free Facebook exacerbated the situation because clicking on a link to verify a news article would require data, so news feed content became the only source of information. For example, a person intentionally spreading fake news could easily share a link to an article, change the headline, description, and image on the link preview, and share it in the guise of legitimate news.[45] Exhibit 4 shows an example of a fake news article. Hence, saliency bias and what Kahneman calls '*what you see is all there is*', both of which prey on individuals' tendency to form judgements, impressions, and even beliefs based on what is in front of you, were rampant on the social media platform.[46]

Exhibit 4 – An example of a fake news article[47]

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[43] Davey Alba, "How Duterte Used Facebook To Fuel the Philippine Drug War," September 4, 2018, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/daveyalba/facebook-philippines-dutertes-drug-war

[44] "How Facebook News Feed Works," Tech Crunch, accessed January 10, 2019, https://techcrunch.com/2016/09/06/ultimate-guide-to-the-news-feed/

[45] David Cohen, "Advertisers on Facebook Can No Longer Edit News Articles' Headlines, Descriptions," September 14, 2017, https://www.adweek.com/digital/advertisers-on-facebook-can-no-longer-edit-news-articles-headlines-descriptions/

[46] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 85 and 322.

[47] "Busted: Pope told Filipinos Duterte was chosen by God? It's fake news!", Memebuster Online, October 5, 2017, https://memebuster.net/pope-duterte-chosen-god/

Framing and Fuel: Removing The Elite "Dilawan" (yellow/Liberal Party)

"Change is Coming" was plastered across Facebook posts like Exhibit 5 as the primary tagline and value proposition of a Duterte presidency. At the core of the Duterte campaign was a call to overthrow the elites, particularly the liberal elites disdainfully called "*Dilawan*" or yellow party. The colour yellow symbolised freedom during the Marcos dictatorship but was used against the same liberals who held power after the 1986 People Power Revolution.[48]

Exhibit 5 – Duterte Campaign Cover Photo Sample[49]

While the Aquino administration achieved record-breaking economic growth and implemented landmark reforms like the Conditional Cash Transfer and the K to 12 Basic Education Program during its watch from 2010 to 2016[50], inclusive growth was not felt.[51] As a former senior official admitted, "things were being fixed in a painstakingly slow manner, particularly for things that mattered to the urban middle class".[52] The globally lauded growth the Philippines was experiencing was absorbed by the richest in the country—with 76% of newly created growth in 2013 going to the forty richest families.[53] Many Filipinos did not feel progress in their daily lives.[54] The book *Rise of Duterte* describes the grievance politics that emerged during the 2016 election—"it wasn't rage against the Aquino administration as much as what could be called as 'cacique democracy fatigue'—a raging exasperation with the liberal elite, who dominated the post-Marcos regime."[55]

Duterte effectively laid blame for Filipinos' continued inertia and suffering on, and directed anger and frustration towards, the liberals. In a speech, he exclaimed "Government of the people? Maybe. Government by the people? Maybe. *'Pero putangina itong gobyerno'* (But son of a whore, this government), it is not for the people,"[56] His speeches consistently carried similar narratives

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[48] Richard Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt against Elite Democracy* (Singapore: Palgrave Pivot): 10
[49] "Duterte for President Materials," Blog, accessed January 15, 2019, http://mydigitalmural.blogspot.com/2016/03/duterte-for-president-materials-2016.html
[50] "Human Development and Poverty Reduction," The Official Gazette, accessed on January 19, 2019, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/aquino-administration/human-development-and-poverty-reduction/
[51] Ibid.
[52] Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt against Elite Democracy,* 28
[53] Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt against Elite Democracy,* 29
[54] Ibid.
[55] Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt against Elite Democracy,* 32
[56] Pia Ranada, "Duterte launches campaign: If I make a promise, I'll do it," February 10, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections/2016/121884-duterte-proclamation-rally

against the Aquino government and the elites, laced with empathic expletives intended to rile up his followers. To resolve people's vivid feelings of being trapped, Duterte presented himself as the saviour who will bring forth "*tunay na pagbabago*" (real change).[57]

Identity Emergence: Duterte Die-hard Supporters

On Facebook, hate and anger against the *Dilawan* was systematically reinforced with the daily deployment of key messages across volunteer networks, pages, and accounts that supported Duterte, fuelling confirmation bias and groupthink.[58] In support of the "saviour", a new identity emerged: Duterte Die-hard Supporters (DDS) (Exhibit 6), who endearingly called him "*Tatay Digong*" or "Duterte the Father". Viral posts were easy to achieve with the multitude of zealous followers with real accounts and inauthentic pages.[59] Prominent liberal politicians and dissenters were publicly harassed and became victims of regular online attacks.[60] While many supporters simply campaigned for their chosen candidate, instances of harmful behaviour were also widespread.[61]

Exhibit 6 – Profile Picture of Mocha Uson Blog, the most prominent Facebook page among Duterte Supporters

Duterte's Appeal

 "You know, I dress not to please anybody. I dress to be comfortable", said Duterte in response to criticism on his creased clothes—which he called "*gusot-masa*" or poor man's creases.[62] He effectively projected himself as simple and ordinary—a clear contrast from the sophisticated and wealthy elite politicians and a common identifier with the average Filipino.

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[57] "WATCH: Freddie Aguilar sings at Duterte inauguration," Rappler, June 30, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/nation/138167-freddie-aguilar-sings-duterte-inauguration
[58] Bloomberg Businessweek, "What Happens When Government Uses Facebook as a Weapon?"
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Leila Salaverria, "Duterte: I dress for comfort, and not to impress," Inquirer.net, November 19, 2017, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/946107/duterte-i-dress-for-comfort-and-not-to-impress#ixzz5eGOuwTTg

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His appearance is only one of the elements of identity that masses of Filipinos connect with. Despite being criticized for his crass, sexist, and misogynist remarks,[63] accompanied with profanities, his popularity remains high. Amidst protests against his behaviour, he maintains intense loyalty and his identity as saviour.[64] While his behaviour is unacceptable, did it actually relate more closely with Filipinos' daily interactions online and offline?

As one journalist described, "the president speaks the language of the times: punchy, unedited, unapologetic, angry."[65] His use of English was imperfect and spoken with a provincial accent. He churned out profanities in every other sentence and disrespected women. He talked about killing people casually. He spoke *"kanto"* or *"kalye"* (street corner or street) language,[66] which is a combination of everyday language and what is often called "locker room talk"[67] in the West. It was the same language used in comments, messages, and posts on Facebook, an informal space where Filipinos speak with their families and friends. It was relatable.

Facebook provided this unconventional politician a platform for mass identity projection through text on posts, controversial jokes, recorded videos, and live videos. These tools enabled him to project similarity, establish deep connections, foster loyalty, and transform beliefs.

The Problem with Decency: Groupthink and Intergroup Opposition

In response to Duterte's unacceptable behaviour, the Liberal Party's standard bearer and followers started a campaign for decency (Exhibits 7 and 8)[68], which proved deeply problematic. Advocating for decency inherently shames and regards the other at a level below, consequently, attacking the dignity of the other.

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[63] Felipe Villamor, "Duterte Jokes About Rape, Again. Philippine Women Aren't Laughing. ," New York Times, August 31, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/31/world/asia/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-rape-joke.html.

[64] Suyin Haynes, "Women in the Philippines Have Had Enough of President Duterte's 'Macho' Leadership," July 23, 2018, http://time.com/5345552/duterte-philippines-sexism-sona-women/.

[65] Glenda M. Gloria. "War of Words: Rodrigo Duterte's violent relationship with language." World Policy Journal 35, no. 2 (2018): 9-13. https://muse.jhu.edu/.

[66] "Foreigners speak 'beki', 'kanto' Filipino in Manila," Rappler, August 14, 2015, https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/balikbayan/102541-beki-kanto-tagalog-manila-expats

[67] Bill Pennington, "What Exactly Is 'Locker-Room Talk'? Let an Expert Explain," October 10, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/sports/what-exactly-is-locker-room-talk-let-an-expert-explain.html

[68] Daf Padilla, "Padilla: Let's see," SunStar Publishing, June 20, 2016, https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/81378

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Exhibits 7 and 8 – Facebook materials of the liberal party campaign. Text translations: "*Disente Tayo*" (we are decent) and "*Ibalik natin ang Pilipinas sa mga disenteng Pilipino*" (let us return the Philippines to decent Filipinos)[6970]

In the book *Identity,* Fukuyama highlights: "research has shown that individual self-esteem is related to the esteem conferred on the larger group with which one is associated"[71] and "that an argument offensive to someone's self-worth is often seen as sufficient to deligitimize it".[72] Because Duterte had already made connections with average Filipinos, attacking him was an attack on them too. Needless to say, the campaign against Duterte's behaviour did not achieve its intended results. Online, this fostered more vicious intergroup opposition with the Duterte Diehard Supporters overpowering the '*Dilawan'.* In effect, instead of toppling Duterte's legitimacy, it bred stronger feelings of affiliation and loyalty and hate for the liberals.

Proliferation of Behavioural Biases Online

> *"A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth. Authoritarian institutions and marketers have always known this fact."*[73]
>
> — Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow

The identity-based connections between Duterte and his supporters provided a strong foundation for his online machinery to proliferate. There were many authentic supporters of Duterte, but there was evidence that some people were paid to execute attacks against opponents, spread fake news, and maintain fake accounts and bots. [74] It was a clear weapon during elections and a major factor in Duterte's victory. These remain in the Philippine social media space today.

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[69] Oliver Ramirez @Lawyer_Punk, "Disente Tayo," Twitter photo, April 12, 2016, https://twitter.com/lawyer_punk/status/719887104147193856.

[70] "Eight interesting facts about Mar Roxas," Philippine Entertainment Portal, May 5, 2016, https://www.pep.ph/electionwatch2016/news/235/eight-interesting-facts-about-mar-roxas.

[71] Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment,* 107.

[72] Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment,* 117.

[73] Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* 64

[74] Bloomberg Businessweek, "What Happens When Government Uses Facebook as a Weapon?"

Further to the pitfalls of free Facebook in the Philippines, the strategies of the Duterte campaign maximized intensified behavioural biases online. Issues were narrowly framed by campaign strategists who distributed key messages to follower networks. These ranged from messages targeting opponents to various spins to defend Duterte whenever he made dangerous remarks. Reciprocity was used among popular pages that shared each other's content and induced virality. Research suggests that "people experience genuine pleasure—a rush of dopamine—when processing information that supports their beliefs".[75] Since posts seen on the news feed were those similar to yours, confirmation bias and overconfidence were reinforced by repeatedly seeing posts that resonated with one's beliefs.

Group biases based on a strong tribalism was widespread online on both sides. Each group was consumed by endowment effect, fiercely protecting their own tribe and views. The environment on Facebook before the 2016 elections became a vicious battlefield, filled with inauthenticity and harmful behaviour. Social cohesion suffered greatly.

Policy Response

Facebook Community Standards

In response to events in the Philippines and similar phenomena in other countries, Facebook released new Community Standards in April 2018.[76] The company had since been aggressively hiring, and aimed to add 10,000 staff to boost efforts to promote security and authenticity.[77]

The policy identifies three primary guiding principles: safety, voice, and equity.[78] Around these principles, Facebook identified policies on violence and criminal behaviour, safety, objectionable content, integrity and authenticity, respecting intellectual property, and content-related requests. which included prohibitions and terms for removing posts.[79]

Through Facebook's recent efforts to fight inauthenticity, 95 pages and 39 accounts with names such as Duterte Media, Duterte sa Pagbabago BUKAS, DDS, Duterte Phenomenon, and DU30 Trending News were removed from Facebook in the Philippines in November 2018.[80] However, were these efforts enough to help remedy or reverse the adverse impacts on social cohesion in the countries it affected?

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[75] Elizabeth Kolbert, "Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds", The New Yorker, February 27, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds
[76] "Facebook Community Standards," Facebook, accessed on December 10, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/introduction
[77] Anita Balakrishnan, "Facebook pledges to double its 10,000-person safety and security staff by end of 2018," CNBC, October 31, 2017, https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/31/facebook-senate-testimony-doubling-security-group-to-20000-in-2018.html
[78] Facebook, "Facebook Community Standards"
[79] Ibid.
[80] "Removing a Spam Network From Facebook in the Philippines," Facebook Newsroom, October 22, 2018, https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/10/removing-a-spam-network-from-facebook-in-the-philippines/

Epilogue

In the case of the Philippine Presidential Election, Facebook was used maliciously, exacerbating damage on social cohesion. Amid calls to boycott the social network, its continuing grip on people's daily habits was undeniable. As of December 2018, Facebook had 1.52 billion daily active users and 2.32 billion monthly active users on average worldwide.[81]

Discussion Questions

1. Using a behavioural lens, what are your insights on elections, populism, and social media?

2. What can be learned from the success of the Duterte campaign in the Philippines? How does it relate to the experiences of other countries?

3. How can behavioural insights be used positively online to promote values of truth, integrity, and compassion?

4. What features need to be incorporated on Facebook to promote deliberative or System 2 thinking and overcome behavioural biases?

5. Is it possible to introduce nudges on Facebook without prescribing what is acceptable on a channel that promotes free speech?

6. In the midst of strong identity politics and inauthentic behaviour, how can values such as truth, integrity, and compassion prevail?

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