

Perceived Influence of the Celebrity Blog on the Political Stand of Development Communication Students

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Abstract

The perception of Development Communication students was obtained in the study to stimulate their knowledge and awareness towards the celebrity blog. The study uses a survey to present the findings in an understanding manner. This study has been done following the safety protocols thus the participants are well cared for during the conduct of the study and have no intention to harm. The researcher uses a questionnaire as an instrument of the study to gather responses from the subject. The timeframe was conducted from May to December 2021. Following the development of different social media platforms and their function to disseminate information and use it as a political platform. The researcher surveyed to know the perception of development communication students towards the socio-political content of the celebrity blog. The researcher found out the various variables contribute to the perception development of the participant in the concern of celebrity's blog. In learning the different variables, the researcher identified the perceived development of communication students toward the socio-political issue on the said blog. These variables include Knowledge, Awareness, Socio-Political, Participation in Political Exercise, Socio-Political News Content, and the Uses the Social Media Platform. Based on the results and objectives of the study, the Development Communication students of Central Luzon State University are moderately knowledgeable regarding the Celebrity Blog and were aware of the Celebrity Blog issues. Respondents disagree that they were influenced by the Celebrity Blog on their political stands. The respondents participate moderately in political exercise having indicated that they strongly agree that the contents of the Celebrity Blog are biased and only favor Duterte's propaganda. However, the respondents disagree that social media platforms, mainly the Celebrity Blog, should be utilized in disseminating information.

Keywords: 1. Perception 2. Development communication 3. students 4. socio-political content 5. celebrity blog

Introduction

Social media platforms are all being infiltrated by fake news and misinformation. With the increasing number of people relying on social media for news, there are growing concerns directed at the audiences regarding news content that may hinder them in discerning truth from facts or news from propaganda (Brooks, 2020). According to

NewsGuard, 8.6 billion interactions on social media involved fake news in 2019, while at least 16.3 billion interactions involved misinformation in 2020. Moreover, Chris Halsne, an investigative journalist and lecturer at American University, stated, "Fake news has now become weaponized in politics." Halsne also added, "People are seeking out news that matches their opinions." As a result, more and more people are falling into the trap of fake news (St. George, 2021).

In the Philippines, fake news is also rampant, with even known figures as the main perpetrators. One of which is the Celebrity Vlogger, also known as the "Queen of Fake News." The Celebrity Vlogger is a pop star best known as the leader of the Celebrity Girls, a sexy girl group in the Philippines. In the early years of Rodrigo Duterte's presidency, The Celebrity Vlogger is a very vocal supporter of his. She came out as one of Duterte's most influential voices, garnering twice as many Facebook followers as she had at the beginning of the campaign. With more than five million likes on her Blog Facebook page, The celebrity vlogger is proven as a huge influencer in social media. However, accusations of spreading false news and inciting online hate have been leveled against her. She is widely despised due to her image as a purveyor of fake news and a proponent of ad hominem arguments (Reyes, 2017).

The Celebrity Vlogger, in the present time, is a public official. Hence, she is bound by the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," also known as the Republic Act No. 6713. The nature of her job, which is communicating the activities and programs of the government to the public via social media, makes it more difficult for her to draw a line between personal and public issues on her Facebook page. Under the code, the vlogger is forced to understand the impact of her words and opinions on the public interest. Regardless of how much the celebrity claims her blog is for personal reflection, as a public official, her posts on social media will be a post of a government official that is being compensated by the taxpayers' money (Ranada, 2017). However, there is still a lot of published fake news from the Celebrity Blog until the present time.

According to Hapal (2017), Celebrity Vloggers' top source of news is the Trending News Portal (TNP). In less than a year, the celebrity has shared TNP content more than 500 times, far more than she has shared content from any other website. The TNP website is known for publishing viral content and also stories in favor of Duterte. This criticized the critics and expressed admiration to the president. However, unlike other websites, the articles published by TNP all came from social media. They indiscriminately report viral content without verifying or confirming the source's credibility, hence contributing to the spread of misinformation online (Hapal, 2017).

One of the fake news posted by the Celebrity Blog is her accusation towards St. Scholastica's College students. This is after the said students protested with the Supreme Court's approval about the burial of Marcos in the heroes cemetery. The Celebrity vlogger shared a post accusing the school of coercing students into rallying, which the college and the students themselves refuted. Another is the red-tagging of four female UP students, with the caption on her post "Study Now, NPA Later." She also implied that the students from state universities, such as the University of the Philippines and Polytechnic University of the Philippines are rebels, due to the constant criticism towards the Duterte administration (Arias, 2020).

The controversy surrounding the Celebrity Blog serves as a reminder that something is fundamentally wrong with the democracy in the Philippines. Citizens are fighting directly with one another (on social media), and the fact that dissent is occurring more actively outside of the government rather than within should be considered a concerning issue (Rappler, 2016). A democratic society values the right to free expression

as one of its characteristics. The right to free expression is a basic and universal human right. However, the Celebrity Blog is a peddler of fake news; hence, the world of social media, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, is more divided on their socio-political views than ever (Contreras, 2020).

Consequently, Atienza & Magkilat (2019) emphasized the importance of perception in politics. The authors stated that “politics is a game of perception,” in which what occurs may differ from what the public believes, and anyone entering the political arena should be aware of this. In the game of political survival, perception is much more important than reality. For instance, in the case of the celebrity blog, the perception of people is essential in her political success. The perception of people who support her and those who criticize her heavily influences their political behaviors and views. In the current political climate of the Philippines, it is crucial to be aware of which view is socially and politically correct.

With the internet paving way globally due to the pandemic crisis, information, as a result, is accessible more than ever. Filipinos spend much time on social media, sharing and co-creating content. Hence, practicing critical thinking and verifying information becomes essential. Moreover, it is also critical to educate citizens about digital literacy to combat misinformation (Marlina, 2020). According to the global survey conducted by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (Cigi), 86% of social media users were deceived by fake news, most of which is spread via Facebook (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2019).

Consequently, the celebrity, a political blogger, is a known figure in the Philippines due to her reputation for spreading fake news. The celebrity has been chastised for spreading false and misleading news on her “ Blog” Facebook page and for allegedly misusing her ostensibly personal blog platform for official duties (Rappler, 2017).

Although there are some existing data regarding the implications of the fake news content in the Celebrity Blog to the public, there is still much that remains unknown. The perceptions of the public, specifically the Development Communication students, lack in the broader literature. Thus, this identified research gap will be addressed by the study. The outcome of the study will significantly benefit the Development Communication students in addressing the impact of the Celebrity Blog on their socio-political behavior and perceptions.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to achieve its general objective of determining the perception of Development Communication students particularly to the socio-political news content of the CelebrityBlog by focusing on the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the knowledge and awareness of the Development Communication students about the Celebrity Blog.
2. To determine the perceived implications of Celebrity Blog on the socio-political stand of Development Communication students.
3. To identify the participation in political exercise shaping the perception and attitude of Development Communication students.
4. To analyze the perception of Development Communication students about the socio-political news content in the celebrity Blog.
5. To determine how the Development Communication students use the social media platform, mainly the celebrity Blog, in disseminating information.

Scope and Limitations

The study will only focus on the knowledge, awareness, and perception of the Development Communication on the Mocha Uson Blog in Central Luzon State University. Additionally, This study was carried out beginning with the first semester on August 16, 2021, A.Y. 2021-2022.

Review of Related Literature

According to Alfaro (2020), since before the COVID-19 epidemic, fake news has been spreading, particularly through social media, emails, and instant messaging applications. People were duped into believing in certain issues by a variety of sources. Especially at this time of the pandemic, it is usually done to stress out citizens, making them more pressured by the risks and opportunities they are experiencing during the outbreak. According to the article, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, and much misinformation has been spread in the media. Many people have reached conclusions about certain issues even though none of them have been confirmed by credible sources. Based on the celebrities blog, these were not supported by credible references, and were just published on her own or were shared as fake news in other parts of the media.

Based on Cabauatan et al. (2020), students are embracing new technology on the market that can help them study more efficiently. As fake news has been circulating online, it is a huge risk for students who can credit sources mostly from the internet, especially when books and other physical reading materials are not mostly used. The internet is currently one of the main sources of reading materials because of the innovation of technology. Students may now access a variety of online resources, software, and programs to help them cope with the many educational activities assigned by their professors. This is a huge risk since the media is easily manipulated.

Political leaders are using the term "fake news" to sow distrust in the media, prevent articles from being published, and even arrest journalists throughout the world (Lees, 2018.) The Philippine media is not as right as anyone thinks. With numerous credible sources and articles to get news from, the administration is still making its way towards decreasing the population of knowledgeable journalists. The president of the Philippines still accuses journalists of publishing "bullshit", when in fact, it is based on factual observations that were visually seen during his years of presidency. This contradicts the issue of fake news, where the celebrity's blog is not targeted by the government for publishing misinformation materials since most of its content is biased. The government continues to benefit from articles that disseminate fake news but contain biased content. In the Philippines, Duterte has waged a public battle against some media sources, frequently referring to them as "bullshit" and "fake news." Rappler.com, the country's sole digital-based news outlet, is the latest target. The government stated in January 2018 that Rappler's operating license would be revoked. Rappler has long been regarded as one of the most reliable sources of news, with most articles being candid about what is going on in the country and how the administration is handling it. Authors of such articles are attacked because of their unbiased statements, which reflect the current situation of the country.

According to Cabanes & Ong (2018), technology has been manipulating the media into knowing what to believe when it comes to spreading certain news. Various study

techniques are currently being utilized to try to figure out how laptop displays and cell phones are being used to control public discussion, hijack mainstream media agendas, and influence political agendas throughout the world. Based on the celebrity's blog, it is clear that her Facebook account easily tricks netizens into knowing what news to believe in. Many troll accounts can also manipulate such news, which will result in misinformation. As the article suggests, Philippine politics are formed by a culture of patronage between an oligarchic elite and their supporters, who have dependent and obligation ties with them. This explains why many news articles are being shared on social media. While supporters of the administration tend to share this news without proper investigation.

A study conducted by Sese (2016), examines the political biases of the President, Rodrigo Duterte. The celebrities blog is one of the mentioned reporters, and the majority of the published articles and posts are biased and untrue. Her Facebook page serves as the hub of a well-oiled pro-Duterte propaganda operation. One of her posts instructs netizens to follow other Duterte-related pages and anonymous blogs.

According to Cabanes (2017), anger and resentment continue to thrive on social media in the Philippines. This does not avoid the engagement of netizens in the media where they tend to express themselves, whether it is toxic or not. Approaches are unstoppable and always cause conflicts between supporters and non-supporters of the government. There are a lot of cases of political trolling as well. The celebrity's blog was also seen as a credible source because of her well-known name. However, her name does not comply with her political stance, where her statements should not be treated as something people should believe in and see her as a credible source. Despite claiming on Twitter, a social media platform, that she was not a journalist, the blogger took a shot at journalists, accusing them of being paid to intentionally attack the president. This statement then made people think that she was a hero. However, she has had her dismissal since her published posts are considered fake and biased. She is now known as "a national troll, a laughingstock, a 'Dutertard'".

Those who have been harmed by professional trolls, for example, understandably feel angry and frustrated. However, it is important to note that not all of those labeled as trolls are hired to convey a predetermined message against Duterte's opponents. Many of them also have real social media profiles that they utilize to interact with the public. Trolls have become a source of contention in the Philippine media. The chaos that citizens are now experiencing from the administration sums up why most are being accused of getting paid to post certain news. Both supporters and non-supporters of the government are victims of such accusations.

Gaps in the Celebrities Blog

According to (Gappy et al, 2018), the use of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction as a concept is what entails in the study. By examining the celebrities Blog in socio-political discourse analysis about discourses in social media text particularly the celebrity'sblog and to 1986 EDSA people power revolution. It focuses mainly on examining the blog as a platform of discourse, to social media, the context of globalization while the individual's perception is lacking. The need to assess people's thinking turned out scarce and the need to further investigations should be sufficed and addressed.

According to Zaide (2018), she began analyzing the celebrity'sblog from the Philippine context focusing on qualitative content analysis because a dearth cases has been found, in which there are lacking studies about it. According to Cruz (2019), she recommended that an analysis should be expanded and the scope of the study should be

extended, see whether similar tactics are still used to support his administration. In a tweet by Antonio (2020), he highlighted the use of categorical content analysis and data extraction of the celebritiesblog, beginning the term as a public official until her resignation in 2019. It appears that designs have been numerous and become plenty in time. As a result, the dearth has already been filled out. In this research, the researcher will spin it in a different approach and will focus on unexplored areas. Hence, the perceptions of the public particularly the Development Communication students.

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design. Respondents were composed of 100 students selected randomly from Bachelor of Science in Development Communication (BSDC) students. Data were collected using a google form questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussions

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1, illustrates that most of the respondents who answered the survey are 21 years old making up 29% of the total respondents. Meanwhile, some respondents are 17 years old representing 3% of the sample, 16% of the respondents are 18 years old and 19 years old representing 23% of the sample, and 20 years old representing 20% of the sample, 5% of the sample respondents are 22 years old and lastly 23 years old that represents 4% of the sample. Based on the table, it is evident that most of the respondents who participated in the study were female, comprising 76% of the total respondents, while 23% who took the survey were male and 1% percent of the total respondents indicate others. The table shows, there is an equal number of respondents from all sections of BSDC.

Respondents Level of Knowledge on the Celebrity Blog

Based on the data in Table 2, the majority of the respondents are moderately knowledgeable regarding the root causes of issues surrounding the celebrityblog, with a rating of 1.97. The respondents are also moderately knowledgeable regarding the top source of news of celebrity blogs and its significance on the current political climate in the Philippines, both with a rating of 1.81, respectively. It was followed by a rating of 1.83, in which the respondents were moderately knowledgeable about the purpose of the shared news content on the celebrityblog. However, the respondents have little to no knowledge regarding the identity of individuals handling the celebrityblog, with a rating of 1.56. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University are moderately knowledgeable about the celebrityblog, with a rating of 1.80, respectively.

Respondents Level of Awareness on the Celebrity Blog

Findings revealed in Table 3, show the awareness of the respondents regarding the celebrityblog. Based on the data, the majority of the respondents are aware that the celebrityblog only endorses Duterte propoganda on social media, with a rating of 2.76.

With a rating of 2.55, the respondents are also all aware of celebrity blogs' violation of the community standard in social media, its misuse and abuse of the freedom of speech, and how it promotes personalism instead of rationality in political discourse. It was followed by a rating of 2.67, in which the respondents were again aware of the complaints about its lack of credibility. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University are aware of the celebrityblog's issues, with a rating of 2.66, respectively.

Respondents Socio-Political Stand

Table 4, shows the majority of the respondents agree that the celebrity blog did not change their political ideologies, with a rating of 1.56. The respondents also agree that thecelebrity blog caused the decline of their trust in the government, with a rating of 1.67. However, the respondents disagree that the celebrity blogmade them doubt news media reports, with a rating of 1.85. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University strongly disagree that thecelebrityblog changed their socio-political stand, with a rating of 1.69, respectively.

Respondents Participation in Political Exercise

Figures in Table 5, shows the participation of the respondents in political exercises that shaped their perceptions and attitude. The majority of the respondents are moderately participating in criticizing and voicing out valid complaints against the government, with a rating of 2.26. It is followed by a rating of 2.12, in which the respondents moderately participate in sharing and commenting about socio-political issues on social media. The respondents are also moderately participating in heated debates about socio-political issues on social media and staying quiet to trust the law and the government, with ratings of 2.00 and 1.98, respectively. However, there is little to no participation in defending the government against its critics, with a rating of 1.65. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University moderately participate in the political exercise, with a rating of 2.00.

Socio-Political News Content

Based on the data, in Table 6, the majority of the respondents agree that thecelebrity blogis a purveyor of fake news content, with a rating of 3.21. They also agree that it is politically biased as it frames issues that are only favorable to the Duterte presidency, with a rating of 3.21. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agree that thecelebrity blogdoes not spread facts, only Duterte propaganda and manipulates public opinion on social media, with ratings of 3.13, respectively. Additionally, the respondents agree that thecelebrityblog neither verifies nor check the credibility of the contents it shares on its page, with a rating of 3.00. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University agree about the accusation issues surrounding the socio-political content in the celebrity blog.

The usefulness of the Social Media Platform

Table 7, determines how the Development Communication students use the social media platform, mainly the celebrity blog, in disseminating information. Based on the data, the respondents agree that they utilize social media platforms to stay up-to-date with

socio-political issues, with a rating of 2.82. However, they disagree that all social media platforms are reliable sources to utilize when gathering and disseminating data and the best sources when fact-checking a socio-political issue, with ratings of 2.10 and 2.24, respectively. For the overall result, the development communication students of Central Luzon State University disagree that social media platforms, mainly the celebrity blog, should be utilized in disseminating information.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are made according to the study 's problem produced by the researcher.

1. The researcher finds out that the celebrityblog is well-known among Central Luzon State University development communication students.
2. Students at Central Luzon State University dispute that the CelebrityBlog modified their socio-political position.
3. Development Communication students moderately participated in political activity.
4. Moreover, the Central Luzon State University development communication students agree on the accusations surrounding the celebrity blog's socio-political content.
5. In addition to the celebrity blog, students at Central Luzon State University argue that social media platforms should not be used to disseminate information.

Recommendations

This study entitled the perception of Development Communication students towards the socio-political content of the celebrity blog has compiled the following recommendations for future researchers and individuals who might want to pursue similar studies. Based on the findings and conclusions from this study, the following recommendations for additional research are offered.

1. The researchers used an online survey questionnaire to gather information from the respondent. It is recommended to use interviews as an instrument for data gathering to be more appropriate and accurate.
2. The study only analyzes one blog regarding the topic; hence, the researcher highly recommends the use of the different articles and asks them about their perception of the topic.
3. Since the election will be near. This research could be repeated in three years to see how students' perception has changed.
4. The study only focused on the students. Future studies may also study the perception level of the adults and compare it with the current results of the study.
5. The study focused only on the perception of development communication students towards the socio-political content. Future studies must also include the factors that may affect their perception, such as the environment, personal feelings, and many more.

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Tables 1 to 7 of the study

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 17 | 3 | 3.00 |
| 18 | 16 | 16.00 |
| 19 | 23 | 23.00 |
| 20 | 20 | 20.00 |
| 21 | 29 | 29.00 |
| 22 | 5 | 5.00 |
| 23 | 4 | 4.00 |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 23 | 23.00 |
| Female | 76 | 76.00 |
| Others | 1 | 1.00 |
| | | |
| Course and Section | | |
| BSDC 1 | 25 | 25.00 |
| BSDC 2 | 25 | 25.00 |
| BSDC 3 | 25 | 25.00 |
| BSDC 4 | 25 | 25.00 |

Table 2. Respondents Level of Knowledge on Mocha Uson Blog

| Knowledge | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. Mocha Uson's top source of | 1.81 | Moderately Knowledgeable |

| | | |
|---|-------------|---------------------------------|
| news on her blog. | | |
| 2. The identity of individuals handling the Mocha Uson Blog. | 1.56 | No Knowledge |
| 3. Root causes of issues surrounding the Mocha Uson Blog. | 1.97 | Moderately Knowledgeable |
| 4. Purpose of the shared news contents on the Mocha Uson Blog. | 1.83 | Moderately Knowledgeable |
| 5. Significance of Mocha Uson Blog on the current political climate in the Philippines. | 1.81 | Moderately Knowledgeable |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 1.80 | Moderately Knowledgeable |

Table 3. Respondents Level of Awareness on the CelebrityBlog

| Awareness | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. Complaints about the lack of credibility of the Celebrity Blog. | 2.67 | Aware |
| 2. Violation of the Celebrity Blog on the community standard in social media. | 2.55 | Aware |
| 3. The misuse and abuse of the Celebrity Blog on the freedom of speech. | 2.59 | Aware |
| 4. Only endorses Duterte propaganda on social media. | 2.76 | Aware |
| 5. Promotes personalism instead of rationality in political discourse. | 2.72 | Aware |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.66 | Aware |

Table 4. Respondents Socio-Political Stand

| Socio-political stand | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. The CelebrityBlog influenced me to change my political ideology. | 1.56 | Strongly Disagree |
| 2. The CelebrityBlog made me trust the government and President Duterte even more. | 1.67 | Strongly Disagree |
| 3. The CelebrityBlog made me doubt the reports of news media. | 1.85 | Disagree |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 1.69 | Strongly Disagree |

Table 5. Respondents Participation in Political Exercise

| Participation in political exercise | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. Engaging in heated debates about socio-political issues on social media. | 2.00 | Moderately Participating |
| 2. Sharing and commenting about socio-political issues on social media. | 2.12 | Moderately Participating |
| 3. Defending the government against its critics. | 1.65 | No Participation |
| 4. Criticizing and voicing out valid complaints against the government. | 2.26 | Moderately Participating |
| 5. Staying quiet and trusting the law and the government. | 1.98 | Moderately Participating |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.00 | Moderately Participating |

Table 6. Socio-Political News Content

| Socio-political news content | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. The Celebrity Blog is a purveyor of fake news content. | 3.21 | Agree |
| 2. The CelebrityBlog neither verifies nor check the credibility of the contents it shares on its page. | 3.00 | Agree |
| 3. The CelebrityBlog is politically biased as it frames issues that are only favorable to the Duterte presidency. | 3.21 | Agree |
| 4. The CelebrityBlog does not spread facts, only Duterte propaganda. | 3.11 | Agree |
| 5. The CelebrityBlog manipulates public opinion on social media. | 3.13 | Agree |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 3.35 | Agree |

Table 7. The usefulness of the Social Media Platform

| Uses the social media platform | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Remarks |
| 1. Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) are the best sources when fact-checking a socio-political issue. | 2.24 | Disagree |
| 2. All social media platforms are reliable sources to utilize when gathering and disseminating data. | 2.10 | Disagree |
| 3. I utilize social media platforms to stay up-to-date with socio-political issues. | 2.82 | Agree |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.39 | Disagree |