

Philippine democracy assignment



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I. INTRODUCTION Philippine democracy and politics has long been a troubled environment. With the recent developments regarding the Napoles case, it has only reaffirmed the fact that there are a lot of failures within this system. Aside from this latest scandal, democracy in the nation has been plagued long before the Pork Barrel story. Issues regarding nepotism, lack of transparency, participation of the masses, and so on have been present for the longest time.

Being a Management student, I am sometimes disconnected with the occurrences in Philippine democracy. It may be due to the fact that the numerous scandals in our country's politics have a numbing effect on our perception, or maybe because I'm tired of hearing more bad than good whenever I tune in to what's happening. I realized that participation in Philippine democracy had nothing to do with your Job, social status or even college course. There is something we each can bring to the table in trying to improve our democratic system.

That is where my Management course comes in. I know politics and management may not always come hand in hand, but there are some aspects to management where Philippine democracy can learn from, more specifically a heightened knowledge of marketing acumen. That is why I believe that knowledge of marketing can lead to a more developed Philippine democratic environment. There are many aspects to marketing which can be applicable to democracy. It's not a field reserved only for consumer products but can be used in a wide variety of areas.

In order to really see how marketing acumen can aid in Philippine democracy, it is important to first define what is marketing, then define what democracy is. II. MARKETING DEFINITION According to the 1 American Marketing Association, “ Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. ” (American Marketing Association website). Here it can be seen that marketing isn’t likened to the typical brand advertising that many people see it as.

At the core, marketing is about offering and delivering value to the customer and even society at large. In order for us to see the value of marketing within Philippine democracy, we have to take a look at what exactly is that value marketing tries to offer us in the context of our political system. The American Marketing Association further explains a facet of marketing, Marketing Research. “ Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues, designs the method for collecting information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyzes the results, and communicates the findings and their implications. (American Marketing Association website). It stresses that information is key in marketing. In order to effectively deliver on what the customer values, information must be provided. One type of marketing relevant to this topic would be political marketing. This type of marketing is about the directed transfer of ideas and information to the voters (consumers) with the use of effective promotions. 2The parallelism between consumer good marketing and political marketing is found in the effective transfer and transparency of information.

That is a key aspect of marketing which politics should have, transparency and access to information. Those who want to use political marketing should be able to anticipate the needs of the consumers (or in the case of politics, voters) by innovating in the way that value is delivered and shared. The principles of political marketing reveal a close correlation with traditional consumer good marketing. Making use of market research, market segmentation, and targeting are concepts used in both political marketing and consumer good marketing.

It's all about finding out what the consumer needs at the moment, how to address those needs, and effectively communicating with the consumer how those needs can be solved. Politicians have to disregard of the “White Tower” syndrome wherein they are so separated from their constituents because of their position that they lose a complete connection with the people they serve. That constant connection with the consumer marketers (or in this case leaders in our democracy) is tantamount in developing a legitimate democratic environment where everyone is given a voice.

A disclaimer must be made however regarding the mix of marketing a politics. Those excellent in marketing aren't automatically ready for Philippine democracy. While marketing does possess aspects that will be beneficial to democracy, it is not an absolute equal. III. DEMOCRACY DEFINITION In order to continue with the assessment, democracy must be defined. Under the definition of Andrew Heywood, we get a good view of how democracy is structured. Heywood starts out by etymologically mapping out the origins of democracy.

He tells of the Greek source of its beginnings thus we see that democracy literally means “ruled by the people”. Many other definitions have been likened to the term democracy. Aside from the etymological meaning, democracy also means a type of government ruled by the people where there is supposedly equal participation based on equal opportunity. The value to take away from Heywood’s definition of democracy is that it is based on what the majority values. It is a system of governance in which the people are ruled by themselves. How does this fit in a Philippine context?

While we call ourselves a democracy and we do act though as we are one, oftentimes what goes on within our politics points out to a more oligarchic system of governance. In an oligarchy the state is ruled only by a few yet very powerful set of families as opposed to the ruled by the people ideology at the core of democracy. These top families then pursue their personal interests and express them through laws and policies. In a democracy however, no matter what, the “few” can never work towards pursuing their own personal interest.

The factor that ultimately decides whether or not a nation will be democratic or oligarchic is the strength of the state. If a state is strong, no family can simply pursue their own personal interest. That can only happen within a weak state system, such as the Philippines. Every new generation or so families come in and out and make laws depending on their own agendas. What happens is that there is then no authentic development and our democracy is undermined. Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong with having Tamils in a democracy just as long as the agenda of a majority is sought after.

V. THE VOTER AS A CONSUMER With the definitions in place, it’s time to look

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more closely in how political marketing works. A good place to start would be from a nation which effectively makes use of political marketing especially during their election season, the 60S. Yes, it is a country entirely different from the Philippines, but there is common ground to start with. First a claimed democratic system is in place (barring the differences in some procedures such as number of candidates) and during election season, voting in the end is done by the majority.

No other presidential candidate proved the importance of political marketing than Barack Obama. From personal donations alone, he used the power of political marketing to raise a collective amount of \$200 million on sponsorships alone. The Obama campaign party hired Chris Hughes, one of the co-founders of Facebook, to set-up a database in the form of MyBarrackObama.com where collections could be coursed through. It was unique in its own right because it was support-centred, meaning it was deemed reliable and accurate. Second, the Obama campaign party had the ability to be very private in their information.

If a donor gave less than \$200 to the campaign, the party did not have to report to the Federal Election Commission for the list of names of those of donated, keeping the information within Obama's camp. What the Obama database showed political onlookers was how he tapped into the zeitgeist and trends of society. Previous to his election season, the internet was lacking in the presence and power of social media and quick information sharing. What used to take a day in relaying information now took seconds during Obama's election season. He saw that and he made no hesitations in zeroing in on that opportunity.

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What Obama did that no other presidential hopeful truly capitalized on was he went viral. By making use of Facebook, Myspace, and more importantly his own database, MyBarrackObama.com he was able to get his points and issues across faster than any other candidate. With his own database, it was designed in such a way that it allowed members to join and invite friends to join as well. It allowed space for ample growth. Looking at the numbers as well it proves Obama took the lead in terms of maximizing internet potential. Comparing the Facebook friends, Obama had 790,000, 150,000 for Clinton and 117,000 for McCain.

The number of Facebook friends won't tell you the winner during election season, but it can tell you who is on top of the fastest way to spread information and gain support, the Internet. When talking about the internet and the Obama campaign, the demographic at the core of it all would be the youth. Aside from capitalizing on the power of social media, Obama also focused on the power of the youth to aid in his campaign. Voters tend to be very loyal to the party they associate themselves with, especially first-time voters. This is the generation which was able to share information the quickest.

This is also the generation which knew the power of social media and used it effectively. Those in the youth always want information, and the best way to get it was through e-mail, text, phone calls, and social networking sites. In the Obama campaign he noticed these trends as any effective marketer would and aligned his campaign to accommodate the massive number of first-time voters. It can truly be called the first 21st century campaign as it utilized the

directions in which society was going. The party found the trends, and used it to their very large advantage.

Based on the 2008 election season, Obama showed how political marketing can be an effective tool to move masses. This specific example may not necessarily show a complete connection to how it can help democracy, but the initial point stresses how with political marketing, information and support can be shared to a big audience number. Now it must be tied back to the home base of Philippine democracy.

V. STEPS IN PHILIPPINE POLITICAL MARKETING

As previously revealed, the Philippines might claim to be a democratic state, but in terms of what goes on and the reality, some might see it as having more of an oligarchic system of politics.

To tackle this concern, the concept of political marketing must be broken down in order to see how Philippine democracy fits into the picture. It has to be fully integrated into the country's society in order for it to have a positive effect on democracy. First it must be stated where the Philippine democratic environment is presently located. An important aspect of political marketing is its ability to exchange information and value. This points out to a need of transparency when it comes to the sharing of what the consumer (or citizen/voter) values at the present moment.

In order for democracy to advance, the citizen must be aware of the current issues of society at large in order for them to make decisions regarding the country. One possible step in expanding the knowledge of the nation's men would be the Freedom of Information bill. The Republic Act 6735 (FOI) aims to end the democracy based on secrecy and implores the government to

provide citizens with the information necessary in voting and setting the foundations of the nation. Here it is visible that there is some sort of progress when it comes to Philippine democracy.

Yes, it is far from a strong state such as the US, but there are steps being made in ensuring that like political marketing, the pertinent information is being shared to the public. What this does for the very powerful few is that it forces upon them a sense of accountability. Reading the newspapers it is astonishing how Janet Lim-Napoles (the current hot topic in Philippine politics and democracy) can hide Php10 billion for a long period of time. It goes to show how from the very top of the government to the very bottom in the local governments, there is a lack of transparency and rotation of information.

Now with stories regarding who receives pork barrel surfacing, it is a confusion for citizens to place their votes and ultimately their trust with candidates who are not 100% clear on their track record. To integrate political marketing, integrating the FOI bill into the Philippine democratic environment could be the important first step. Based on theory, political marketing, or any sort of marketing is not possible if there is a wall between the consumer and the institutions providing for the consumer.

There has to be a steady inflow and outflow of information so that the majority of society can rule, just as how Heywood stresses. The next step in integrating political marketing into Philippine democracy has to be with the focus of who the target market is. According to the 9National Statistics Office, the Philippines has a pyramid type of demographic. The median age

of civilians is 23.4 years which connotes how young the population of the Philippines is. Referencing back to the 2008 US presidential campaign, it was seen how Barack Obama effectively used marketing to gather not only donations, but ultimately votes.

While the first step is to actively share information over those who make laws in the country, the next step should be focused on how that information is shared. According to a study made by IO Local Measure, the Philippines is one of the countries that utilize social media in sharing information and spreading news. It even states that the country does so more than the United States. Already it proves how the concern of the nation's wealth is non-issue. Just because the US is a far richer country does not conclude that its access to social media is far greater.

The study helps show how political marketing can be executed in the Philippines as well as the 2008 US presidential campaign. With the medium of social media, information and most importantly, the value of civilians, can be shared almost instantaneously. In fact, more and more people (especially those in the youth) are getting their information online either through legitimate websites or through knowledge shared by their friends. The Philippines is becoming more and more fast-paced and the government should and must adjust to the growing needs of the civilians it serves.

A question arises though, with the presence of social media, and the ease of it, would it be easier for certain government officials and candidates to manipulate the system in such a way that it works for them? The positive trait of the internet is that it provides a voice and a platform for all those who

have access to it. It would be safe to question then the legitimacy of what goes is information is rotated around the web. The logical answer to that would be, yes. Simply put, it is easy for people to spread fake information and mask it as fact.

The burden lies on the shoulders of the civilians to determine what is true and what is just a ploy devised by opportunistic officials. Yet, no matter what era, we can see how media plays an important role in assessing public opinion and establishing accountability with our leaders. During the 1970s Marcos administration, alternative media (which at the time meant underground newsletters and radio programs) exposed the various criminal acts done of Marcos' part. It became a crucial instrument in challenging the leaders on counts of accountability as well became a medium for courting public opinion through.

While information can always be manipulated and faked, civilians who truly are in the search for value within their democratic system will always be able to sift through what is real and what appears to be real. The steps listed above provide an insight on how political marketing on a surface level perspective can prove to be beneficial for democracy in the country. It allows for the civilians who ultimately have the power in deciding the fate of the nation to be maximally immersed in with the information surrounding the democratic environment.

There are, however, certain more specific steps that the country can take to really integrate political marketing in the democratic system. One point of improvement is connected with the Philippine electoral standards. Based on the

facts sourced from the 2010 Philippine presidential elections, a lot of important points regarding political marketing have surfaced. The 12election was a close fight between present President Ninoy Aquino III and Manny Villar Jr. It is interesting to point out however what kind of medium each used for their campaign tactics.

Villar forced his popularity polss up by making use of traditional paid television advertising. While President Aquino on the other hand used free media to bolster support from citizens. It only goes to show how powerful free media can be. Certain standards still have to be met when it comes to expressing information whether it be through paid advertising or through social media. Now that the age of information has arrived, knowledge has to be expressed in such a way that it informs civilians of hat is really going on with government leaders.

A proposed idea would be to have from each candidate during elections a clear way of expressing platforms. Now that information is so easy to spread, sharing one’s complete platform and stance on issues is a possible way to use political marketing to give emphasis on what civilians’ value. Time and time again, during election season the countrys television sets are bombarded with paid advertising from the candidates. More often than not the commercials don’t fully explain what the hopefuls are trying to say regarding their stance of relevant issues. What these concerns call for is a standard when it comes to information sharing.

Through possible steps such as the FOI bill and the further use of information sharing mediums, it is plausible that citizens will be fully equipped with all

the knowledge they need to know in developing a stronger democratic environment. VI. CONCLUSION With all that has been said regarding political marketing and the sharing of value and information to voters, one must ask if developing Philippine democracy through political marketing is in actuality possible. Through the information gathered and the acts recorded, it is very much a possible reality with the years to come in the Philippine political sphere.

Data shows that because the Philippines is one of the countries that tops the list when it comes to using social media and other forms of quick information sharing, it can be an effective tool for government officials and leaders to promote more awareness and transparency when it comes to the value that they try to circulate. With the gaining presence of the FOI bill and the scandal of the Napoles case, it is becoming more and more pressing for accountability and information to be available to citizens who pay taxes and vote for the leaders they deem fit for their positions.

It is becoming more and more frustrating for a lot of civilians who honestly pay their taxes and vote with the hope of changing the country for the better to only get duped by conniving politicians in the end. It is not enough however for social media and other modes of transferring information and value to be in place. There has to be certain standards regarding what value systems are being circulated and dispersed to the general public. It helps that the FOI bill is being pushed in the Philippine government. Until it is officially passed and takes on full effect as a law, it cannot demand accountability from the leaders the Filipinos elect.

When it comes to the information shared by the government it usually comes in the form of newspaper articles/clippings that have been abused with facts sometimes have been taken out of context by numerous publications. If it happens to come from them directly, there is a long lag time between the information is shared with the public, which is hard to imagine given the Age of Information people are currently living under. Finally, as a 4th year Management student in the Ateneo de Manila University, I have spent my college years within a culture that stresses accountability and the need for transparency when it comes to value and information.

Plagiarism is dealt with much harsher in university as compared to other colleges because Ateneo upholds the fact that whatever you market to the public must be true. The anti-theses of marketing is the spread of false information and the conveying of a manipulated value system. Marketing, and not only political marketing, at the end of the day must listen to the consumer and deliver on their desires. If the delivery is based on secrecy and falsehood, then the consumer can ever be truly satisfied. I, fortunately, have the accessibility of social marketing within my fingertips.

It is my duty however to uphold true information and be careful with what I believe. For the government can always share information with their citizens, but as a consumer I have the power of believing what I choose to believe in. Assessing the required readings under the light of the topic brings about new insight in developing the thesis. While the texts of Heywood and Ma. Rebullida don't bring anything revolutionarily new to the table, what it does is it sets the basis for developing arguments.

A text need not necessarily be controversial to serve a purpose, at its most basic, the required readings provided an affirmation and standard knowledge on what exactly happens in a democracy and in the redmocratization of the Philippines. Ultimately, it provided great insight in building the foundation to prove how political marketing can aid in Philippine democracy. vii.

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Sharpe, 2011. Print. (ASIDE FROM ENDNOTES, THE LISTED SOURCES ABOVE WHERE USED TO HELP CRAFT THE DIRECTION OF THE PAPER)