

To cope with changing times, especially through the use of information and communications technology (ICT), the Philippine government finds alternative ways by which it can hasten and ensure that proper information be given to its citizens. At the grassroots level, the clamor for fast, yet cost-effective mechanisms is also being realized, especially in times of disaster. These were realized through the use of social media, defined a group of internet-based applications and platforms, which allows for the creation of user-generated content and used for interaction and exchange (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010).

The experience brought by strong typhoons such as Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013 and Ruby (Hagupit) in 2014 are testimonies on the reliance of government entities on social media, particularly on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Aside from natural disasters, man-made concerns such as traffic and accidents were also reported through these means. Local governments, particularly cities, which are presumed to have more of the necessary infrastructure to access social media, are also gearing towards the use of these venues to spread crucial information.

This study therefore takes a look at how Philippine cities use social media for governance purposes, especially for disaster risk mitigation. It also looked at how some government entities manage Facebook and Twitter, or how it operates in terms of protocols, both for information dissemination and feedback.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE

Data collected for the study came from an eight-month monitoring routine for Facebook and Twitter content generated by cities on the first ten days of every month. Essentially, these were gathered from the cities' assumed 'official' accounts, public information office (PIO) accounts, and disaster risk reduction management (DRRM) office accounts. If there are none, the researchers refer to the local chief executive's accounts.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The researchers monitored the number of tweets, followers and likes (quantitative), and looked at the content using text mining, content analysis and network analysis.

After the monitoring period, the team conducted a Round Table Discussion (RTD) with nine (9) Metro Manila cities and selected national government agencies such as MMDA and PAGASA in order to validate the results and take a look at their social media account management and possible protocols in information dissemination and feedback.

FINDINGS and KEY EVIDENCE

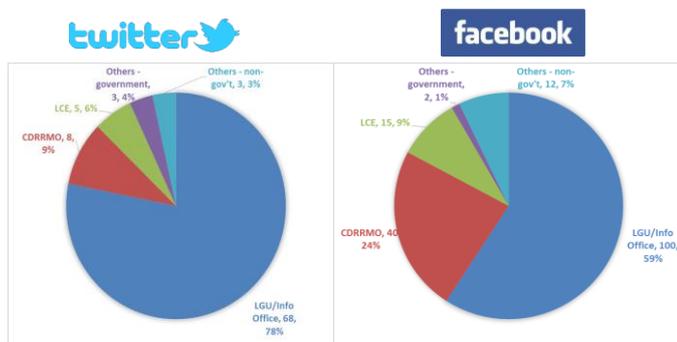
- Not all cities have access to the internet and social media.** There is still an uneven access of these tools across the country. It turned out during the search for existing accounts that cities in Luzon are more active in using social media than in other parts of the country. Out of the 143 cities, only around 51% (73 cities) use Twitter, while Facebook has a relatively larger percentage of users at around 82% (117 cities). Table 1 shows the breakdown.

Table 1. Percentages of FB and Twitter Usage

Island Group	Facebook	Twitter
Luzon	97%	59%
Visayas	74%	54%
Mindanao	58%	30%
TOTAL	82%	51%

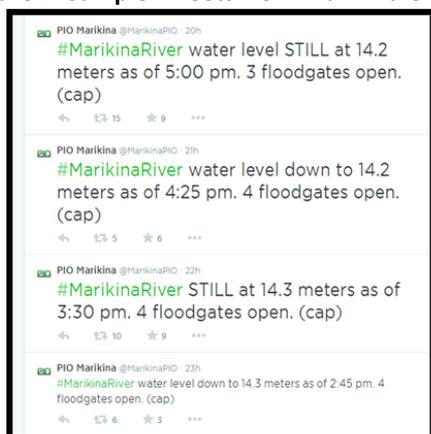
- CDRRMO accounts comprise only a small portion of the existing city social media accounts.** Most cities in the Philippines delegate social media use to their respective Public Information Offices (PIO). City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Offices, who are primarily tasked to attend to DRM concerns, rarely have their FB or Twitter accounts to regularly update citizens on weather issues. Figures below show the types of accounts based on who runs them.

Figure 1. Percentages of accounts based on who manages it



- When used for DRM, cities' accounts put premium on preventive measures and preparedness.** Content-wise, cities provide weather updates, advisories on water levels of nearby rivers and power interruptions or declogging schedules, traffic updates (NCR), safety tips, hotline numbers and announcements on class suspensions. In some cases, there are also posts on earthquake and volcanic eruptions, response teams in action, disaster aftermath photos, efforts by the local government to attend to displaced constituents, and where to send donations. Figure 2 shows the sample tweets of Marikina PIO.

Figure 2. Sample Tweets from Marikina City



The nature of disaster or concerns raised on Facebook and Twitter also generally depend on geographical location and seasonal activities. Different cities have different contents. For instance, cities in the Bicol and Eastern Visayas regions focus on typhoons. NCR cities focus on traffic.

- Protocols in managing social media accounts are non-existent and informal in nature.** Based on the accounts observed, and the RTD conducted, some LGUs practice the use of multiple accounts in information dissemination. However, the lack of protocols for naming, and not too “search-friendly” or not too “official-sounding” names may let users be vulnerable to subscribe to wrong information.

In terms of people handling these accounts, “social media officers” generally work using general practice (such as feedback referrals) to make sure that concerns are brought to the attention of the right local

government office. There are no or limited documents that serve as operational guidelines.

- Cities' social media accounts are strategically linked with relevant national and regional accounts.** While currently, LGUs cannot generate their own data, they link themselves with national agencies such as PAGASA, DepED, PIA and MMDA in order to facilitate the trickling down of relevant information to the grassroots. Figure 3 shows a sample re-post of an update from PAGASA.

Figure 3. Re-posted PAGASA advisory



- Sometimes, social media accounts are also affected by changes in political environment.** Since social media accounts are being used to also update constituents on the current activities of the LGU, some accounts are being utilized for image-building of elected political personalities. There were also cases wherein some accounts cease to be ‘official’ because of changes in leadership. Figure 4 presents an example.

Figure 4. Example of Disclaimer for a previously official page



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