



FLEISHMANHILLARD



2022

Philippine
**Presidential
Elections**

The Youth and Their Battleground:

Insights on the 2022 Philippine Presidential Election and How Businesses Can Adapt to the New Landscape

On May 9, 2022, former Senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. of the Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (Federal Party of the Philippines) emerged as the winner in a hotly watched national election. President Marcos Jr. received 58.77% of the total votes cast, making him the first presidential candidate to gather a majority number of votes in post-1986 election history; he is currently serving as the 17th president of the Republic of the Philippines.

President Marcos Jr. is the son of former president Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., and former First Lady Imelda R. Marcos. He was vice governor and governor of Ilocos Norte and was also a senator. In 2016, he ran for vice presidency and lost. His most recent and official presidential campaign ran on a platform that promised progress through unity.

More than 30 years after the popular People Power uprising which forced the Marcos family into exile, President Marcos Jr. faces a nation grappling with the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing geographic tensions across Asia Pacific. Additionally, President Marcos Jr. also faces a polarized populace divided from the recently concluded campaigns. According to local pundits, the 2022 national elections reflect the polarization of society that will be carried over to the next administration.

The recent election illustrates trends that are bound to affect the way businesses and brands communicate in a post-election landscape and beyond. FleishmanHillard’s Manila office, together with its research and analytics practice, TRUE Global Intelligence (TGI), looked at social media conversation and engagement trends that transpired during the run-up to the election and in the weeks immediately following, assessing both short-term and long-term implications as viewed through public commentary.

FleishmanHillard used the data from social media to gather insights around Filipino social media users, specifically on Twitter, YouTube, Forums and blogs. All coverage originated in the Philippines. The timeframe for coverage collection was from April 12, 2022 through May 15, 2022.



17TH PRESIDENT. President Ferdinand “Bongbong” R. Marcos Jr. (fifth from right) takes his oath of office as the 17th President of the Republic of the Philippines before Supreme Court Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo at the National Museum of the Philippines in the City of Manila on Thursday (June 30, 2022). Marcos, in his inaugural address, vowed to promote unity and bring progress to the country. (PNA photo by Avito C. Dalan)

Social Conversations

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Social media is projected to continue its current demographic dynamics, with more and more users going online each year. As a whole, the Philippines is expected to reach over 91 million social media users, up 8% from the anticipated number of users (84 million) in 2022.

The ongoing clash between facts and misinformation in the 2022 national elections

Disinformation became the center of the electoral discourse in Philippine social media. There was a steady uptick in the volume of social conversations regarding fake news post-election from 1% to 4%, which may increase over time.

Interestingly, social conversations regarding fake news and disinformation are mostly driven by the youth, aged 18-24 years. In a separate finding, 57% of women talk about fake news and disinformation in the social media space.

Top Themes Post-Election

		Volume	Engagements
COMELEC & Polling	1%	81.k	1.1M
Marcos Estate Tax & Legacy	1%	58k	638.4k
Fake News	1%	44,8k	405.7k
Education	1%	42k	469k
Gender Equality	<1%	23,7k	280.1k

According to the latest Social Weather Stations poll, 7 out of 10 Filipino adults believe that the problem of fake news online is a severe one that needs to be addressed (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2022). Some pundits call 2016 the first “social media elections,” where internet trolls have been utilized to amplify key messages of certain candidates, even spreading misinformation in the process.

Traditional media may not be enough to counter this because these posts are amplified faster before mainstream media can fact-check. A 2017 survey showed that 87% of Filipino respondents trust the information they receive from social media over mainstream media (Chua, 2021).

Top Themes Post-Election

		Volume	Engagements
Fake News	4%	57.8k	428.4k
Marcos Estate Tax & Legacy	4%	56.3k	534.4k
COMELEC & Polling	4%	49.7k	311.6k
Unity	1%	8.6k	133.9k
Education	<1%	4.8k	91.9k

Social media will continue to be the main battleground between facts and misinformation as traditional media and civil society attempt to catch up against viral yet unverified stories (Quitzon, 2021). This trend has been in place since 2016 when many Filipinos became more active online in supporting their candidates on Facebook (Arugay, 2022). A study after the earlier election found that 70% of Filipino respondents thought that Facebook influenced their vote (Arugay, 2022).

Results from recent monitored social conversations also show that Filipinos have become more active in voicing out their thoughts during the elections. Filipinos used Facebook in voicing their support, opposition and opinion on issues that matter most to them.

However, platforms like Facebook may be mired by distorted truths and misinformation online, causing concern given how prominent these platforms are: 78% of Filipinos get their news through Facebook.

Gender & Age Breakdown by Theme

Theme	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Fake News	41%	59%	58%	39%	3%	0%	0%	0%
COMELEC & Polling	37%	63%	62%	36%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Unity	39%	61%	57%	39%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Education	33%	67%	57%	42%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Post-Pandemic Response	38%	62%	57%	41%	2%	0%	0%	0%

The path forward for businesses and brands

FleishmanHillard's Manila office observed that voices of millennials and Gen Z Filipinos are becoming a steady force in political discourse amid online misinformation.

These online conversations point to continued debate among Filipinos about the future administration's policies. This trend may reflect growing expectations from Filipino consumers for brands to be more vocal about advocacies they care about.

Data shows three imperatives for businesses and brands to consider when communicating post-election and beyond.

1. Importance of advocacy and purpose: Filipino millennials and Gen Zs are looking for brands with clear advocacies that reflect their values. These advocacies need to be creatively communicated to drive up interest and conversation to the brand.

This is consistent with FleishmanHillard's 2021 [Authenticity Gap](#) study which showed that brands need to close the gap between what they promise to consumers and how they behave. Consumers are looking for brands and leaders to take an authentic stand on key policies and issues such as the environment and health.

2. Safeguarding against misinformation: Brands need to be sensitive with how they utilize their own media and social channels. In an era where facts and misinformation collide, businesses need to step up their own communications to ensure accuracy of information in the public sphere. Social media has created an avenue for businesses to be co-creators of content that can be tailored to specific audiences.

3. Authenticity takes center stage: Filipino millennials and Gen Z will continue conversations about disinformation in the aftermath of the Philippine elections. Conscious of social media's ability to amplify false information, brands need to step up their communications through consistency and authenticity.

These qualities can help nurture long-term brand loyalty to Filipino millennials and Gen Z consumers. FleishmanHillard defines authenticity as the fundamental alignment of what the brand claims to be and what it really is. If these two qualities are at odds, their consumers will be dissatisfied, and the business will fall short of expectations.

In an age where there is a battle between facts and misinformation, organizations need to authentically communicate based on what they stand for and what customers expect from them. Additionally, consistency helps brands rise above a muddled social media landscape due to fake news.

Developments from the 2022 national elections show that customers are demanding more for authentic brands that align with their expectations. Both education and fake news have become key themes for consumers across all demographics, showing a common interest regarding these topics.

With facts or fake news cluttering social media, it is paramount for brands to highlight their authenticity to gradually create brand interest, consideration and loyalty in the long run. This can be made possible through educating the public about their commitment to responding to customer needs.

However, brands need to be careful and strategic before jumping on the bandwagon for the sake of gaining consumer awareness. In the FleishmanHillard 2021 Authenticity Gap study, consumers reported expecting companies to be a part of the solution, not just discussion, when it comes to societal impact. Brands must reflect the brand's vision, mission and messages.

Insights from social conversations during the 2022 national elections show that Filipinos are now more engaged in issues that matter most to them. As the Philippines begins a new chapter in its political history, brands are in a unique position to listen to major concerns and expectations from an active and engaged audience.

Social media will continue to be a driving force in influencing conversations in the country. To get ahead of the curve, brands need to address expectations and behaviors attached to this trend.



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