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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**AN ASSESSMENT ON THE DIGITAL FACEBOOK PAGE AS MEANS
OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

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Abstract

The high demand of e-governance and its use of social media has recently been a focus of several communication studies. Due to the need for isolation, communities tend to rely on social media platforms, such as Facebook, to gather information on health and safety protocols. In turn, local government units set up their social media accounts to aid in disseminating necessary content. This demand is not only observable in local government units but as well as in smaller sections of the government such as the Sangguniang Barangay (SB). Among the several SBs in City of Malolos that set up a Facebook account or page are Barangay Sumapang Matanda, Barangay Santisima Trinidad and Barangay Catmon. The prime objective of this study is to assess the level of engagement of barangay citizens in using the Official Facebook page of their barangay by identifying and describing the users of the said social media through their likes, comments and shares on Facebook, then assessing the digital content of the respective Facebook pages of the barangays (SBs) to assist in the improvement of its Facebook pages. A survey was conducted to 400 respondents from the three barangays which showed that public service announcements (PSAs) dominated the Facebook pages while status updates on the programs of government officials are regularly present by using the mother-tongue language for the writing format. Facebook was the most prominent social media used wherein most of the respondents are aware of its existence as an e-governance platform. Respondents used Facebook for around 2-3 hours a day, spending most of their hours by watching videos and getting online information. Overall, the Facebook page of Santisima Trinidad indicated high engagement than the other two (2) Facebook pages.

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The ease of use was marked high as the Facebook pages were often perceived to be user-friendly. However, the timeliness of posts did not meet the expectations of its users as information was sometimes posted late or its timing not accurate. The gathered analysis will be the foundation for the improvement of the Facebook pages of the selected SBs and could eventually be a basis for policy formulation in using Facebook as a means of communication in the barangays.

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Introduction:-

The advent of the internet has opened new platforms for various human activities, from information gathering to social interactions, education, entertainment and the adoption of selected online government services for public administration and communication purposes. The use of online transactions has become a part of government innovation from the traditional face-to-face and paper-based transactions around the world. The last decades introduced the world to new information and communication technologies such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets and now, the social media applications. Every new technology brought unprecedented changes to society which in turn influenced cultures of communication and interaction. The way people communicate changed based on the emergence of the technology presented to society. The popularity of social media, specifically the social networking sites (SNS), have crossed the boundaries from simply connecting people to bringing more valuable functions with most applications offering everything thus, becoming a one stop shop for everyone's needs.

Various functions of online platforms such as that of the social media have proven useful in governance, such as the case in South Africa where Facebook is deemed as the primary social media. It is positively linked to "governance dynamics" of the continent, although the importance given to Facebook as an avenue for governance may vary per country (Asongu and Odhiambo, 2019, p.10). Governments around the world are seizing the opportunities presented by social media, specifically Facebook, to increase its influence over the citizens in the hopes of effecting participation and awareness to its programs. Such is the case study of Sobaci, Hatipoglu and Korkmaz (2018) in their study about the types and categories of Facebook posts and the level of citizen participation in the Marmara Region of Turkey where they found out that there is a direct relationship between the type and category of posts on Facebook and the level of interaction from the citizens. Videos and links were found to gain more interaction compared to photos. However, the study showed that the Facebook administrators of the region used photos more than videos to communicate and disseminate information.

"In the Philippines, efforts to integrate E-Government as a key lever in development started two decades ago" (Magno, 2018, p. 153). The country has proven that time and again, using the internet and the social media are an inevitable part of the daily lives of Filipinos. Manila Times, an online news portal, cited the report of advertising firms We Are Social and Hootsuite, "...that Filipinos remained the top consumer of social media, with an average daily consumption of four (4) hours and 15 minutes. It could be noted that the global average was at two (2) hours and 25 minutes" (Cruz, 2021, October 14). Government communication focuses on releasing public service-oriented content that can easily be disseminated widely to the people; such as news, the government plans, activities, decisions, and actions. It aims to accomplish a variety of goals, like explaining the government's plans and activities to the people, informing the public regarding their rights and obligations, providing instructions on how to act in an emergency, and raising public awareness on social, economic, and environmental issues (Radwan & Mousa, 2021).

The press, radio, and television are some effective communication tools to reach a big audience, particularly when presenting a campaign message. In modern society, traditional and social media are the two major routes through which people use to exchange information. The manner of transmission is a key component of an information-improvement approach. Since the world is moving towards advancement, different information bodies are encouraged to maximize the extent of the advanced technology which includes the government that has the most vital role in the country (Pateña, 2018). For instance, offices in the Philippines are urged by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to use social media in promoting their programs and policies. As specified in an article authored by Barnhart (2022), personnels from government agencies are those that are more exposed and engaged with a large number of social media users. The government is required to engage with its citizens even through social media—it is a civic imperative. Considering this fact, social media is becoming the most popular digital channel for two-way communication since it allows the sender to obtain feedback.

Evidently enough, it holds an essential function of helping the government receive reactions from citizens in the fastest way. According to Huffman (2017), the power of social media's extent has changed for most Filipinos. A student from a roundtable discussion of the study stated that people are more engaged and updated about certain events because of social media—especially the youth who are more likely to get involved in discussions as they desire for change. Technologies such as social media sites, wikis, and folksonomies have become part of e-Government as they create solutions to the problems of the community. As a core of the e-Government, the e-Democracy also takes place which emphasizes the capability of citizens to engage, communicate, criticize, and suggest possible solutions to the encountered problems. As of October 2021, Facebook remains to be the "most popular social media platform among internet users in the Philippines" where "Ownership of a Facebook account is nearly universal among internet users in the Philippines as a whole (99%) and across geographic areas and socio-

economic groupings,” according to a published online news report from GMA News online, a leading news source in the country (Malig, 2021).

Although the Philippine government, both national and local government units, use social media as a tool for communication, the efficiency of using social media, particularly Facebook, is worthy of further study to better capacitate the Local Government Units (LGUs) in their social media consumption. Even Magno (2018) in his study on “E-government and Philippine Development” agreed that “In the past, every transition to a new administration result in a change in the office designated to steer E-Government implementation (p.153).” The problem also arises at the end of every politician’s term where the Facebook page of the barangay is coterminous with that of the incumbency of its administrators. This shows one downside of the implementation process related to the use of social media by the government. The use of social media as support to the administrative functions of the government is supposed to be a strategic action towards disseminating information to the public and getting feedback in lesser time. With the absence of continuity in the use and maintenance of social media pages for administrative and management functions, the strategic implementation of an efficient communication is at risk. Consequently, this could affect the desire for an efficient public service.

The rapid changes in the process of using new technology for human consumption is incalculable that sometimes, the maximum potential of the technology in question is unreached or abused. Hence, the need to understand how each component of our society engages in the use of technology and how it directly affects our lives will always be a matter that needs our attention. Therefore, the study aims to assess the digital content of the Facebook Page of the chosen Sangguniang Barangay (SB) as means of information dissemination in terms of its posts-community announcements, purpose, and use of Facebook features, writing format and over all guidelines.

Impact of Digital Media on Civil Society:-

According to a 2010 paper by Howard, new digital technologies are a crucial addition to improving political communication. Digital media and social networking sites have a significant impact on political culture by offering a variety of communication channels that can advance the sociopolitical facets of society and promote political freedom for those who are able to express their opinions. He went on to say that modern civil society already uses the internet and new media for communication. Civic society creates virtual communities for communication through the usage of the internet. “The Web provides them with a decentralized information infrastructure where social movements can develop” (Howard, 2010). Finally, he made note of the fact that, so far, digital technology-dependent political cultures have a greater global presence than conventional ones since they are much easier to spread. “Every time a citizen uses a mobile device to document a violation of human rights, uses a collaborative spreadsheet to monitor state spending, or compiles evidence about official corruption, she boosts civil society and advances democracy. The most significant effect of digital media may be that it helps people become accustomed to both watching and creating political information” (Howard 2010).

E-governance at the Local Government Level in the Philippines: An Assessment of City Government Website:-

According to Siar (2005), using advance technology for improving the control and enhancing government’s role in giving public service and public administration is getting high reputation nowadays in many parts of the world. Recently the Philippine local government saw the importance of the city website however, there are few adoptions from e-governance tools. The outcome presented there are information and resources that could be enhanced for the reason that most of the information that are available were only about promoting citizen’s awareness and knowing more about their community. Though there are information that are provided on their website, it still needs to be enhanced for it was limited to usual information such as: demography, history and culture, and some information about the politicians and their position in the government (Siar, 2005). This research will be significant for it is about the awareness of the Sangguniang Barngay and its administrators and staff/personnel about the usage of the technology which is the digital media.

Facebook Content Strategy:-

According to Lee, quotes are universal and increase your Facebook interaction since they are easily absorbed by individuals who can relate to them (2016). Emoticons are a different tactic users can employ for powerful content. Hutchinson’s essay from 2019 claims that using more emojis increases engagement, while those without emojis have the lowest average interaction rate. Then determining a good project name since, according to Stibbe (2021), names have power. They have the ability to motivate individuals to behave as though they were being used properly. They significantly affect a company’s tone and brand.

Slattery et al. (2013) state that the employment of the elements and typefaces affects how much space should be added to a line of text depending on its content. Additionally, earlier research indicates that when flanking letters are close to the main letter, lateral inhibition or crowding may be at play. If so, narrowing the gap between words within the word spacing might impede word processing.

Methodology:-

The researchers conducted the study to 65 (Catmon), 191 (Sumapang Matanda) and 144 (Santisima Trinidad) respondents from the total population of the three barangays from the 2020 census. They based this sample size from Slovin's Formula Sampling Theory. The Slovin's formula led to a sample size of 339 from Catmon, 1317 from Sumapang Matanda and 1010 from Santisima Trinidad. Furthermore, the researchers sought advice from their statistician as regards limiting the mentioned sample size to a more reachable and time-efficient figure. Hence, a ratio of 1:50 is considered. After calculating, the researchers came up to a list where the number of respondents with each of the selected barangay: 65 (Catmon), 191 (Sumapang Matanda) and 144 (Santisima Trinidad) with the sum of 400 respondents. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative approach. The researchers used Qualitative approach to get the statistical measurement of the respondents' usage of their barangay Facebook page in terms of factors based on End-User Computing Satisfaction. The researchers, on the other hand, conducted survey to students to gather data that helped them in assessing the Facebook Pages or accounts as means of information dissemination in the perception of the students.

For this study, the researchers used a questionnaire as primary source of data designed for the selected respondents. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part includes questions to get information about the respondents' demographic profile, comprised of their gender, frequency, and length of Internet usage. The second part consists of questions to determine the Internet user behavior or of the respondents; this helped the researchers know how several important aspects can affect the respondents' point-of-view towards the usability of their Facebook page. These aspects included the respondents' frequency of use, and length of exposure- both in terms of Internet usage. The third part of the questionnaire contained an evaluation form where the respondents have rated barangay's Facebook page as means of information dissemination in terms of its content, accuracy, format, ease of use, and timeliness. These factors were based on the End-User Computing Satisfaction or EUCS.

After getting the weighted mean frequency for each element, the researchers based the verbal interpretation to the Likert-Scale Table as shown below:

Table 1. Likert Scale Table with Verbal Interpretation

Numerical Value	Degree	Verbal Interpretation
1.00-1.49	1	Never (not effective)
1.50-2.49	2	Rarely (Slightly effective)
2.50-3.49	3	Sometimes (Moderately effective)
3.50-4.49	4	Often (Effective)
4.50-5.00	5	Always (very effective)

Results and Discussion:-

The analysis and interpretation of those data followed the order of the questions set forth are discussed respectively. Description of the Facebook page in terms of the types of announcements, purpose, use of features, and writing format. Based on the content analysis conducted using the three official Facebook pages of Barangay Sumapang Matanda, Santisima and Canalate, the results of the thematical analyses about the types of announcements that are available on the respective Facebook pages are the following:

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in the form of written text messages. PSAs are a type of content that are regularly found in the Official Facebook pages of the three barangays. Mostly, the announcements focus on the activities of the local government units that relate to their advocacies in the barangays. From January 2020-December 2022 posts, the PSAs focused on relief drives and vaccination announcements. Updates regarding relief

distributions from the provincial and the local sectors were announced including the schedule and the venue where the distribution will take place.

Notice to the public in the form of digital posters. These are information sent to the citizens about any proposed action coming from the officials of the barangay. This may either be updates about the programs of the local government or the campaigns that they launched. Mostly, these notices are reflected in the resolutions created for implementation in the barangay. Moreover, the proponents observed that the Facebook posts are also resharing of posts from the Information Office of Malolos. They also have organic posts including photos of their accomplished activities in the community. Holiday and personal occasion greetings are also present.

Self-promotion. According to Botta (2020), good imagery in produced materials are memorable for the target audience. In addition to this, using an enticing, well-paired image has another benefit that may be more unexpected— images tend to be distinctive over time, and customers will recall the image to locate the same material while viewing search results in the future. For the purpose of utilizing Facebook in governance and reaching out to the citizenry, it was found that the main purpose is to update the citizens with relevant information. However, the other features of Facebook such as video conferencing, calendar, etc. were rarely used to increase the interest and engagement of the residents per barangay. Hence, the LGUs are unable to fully utilize the capacity of Facebook.

Use of Features. Reddick (2004, p.38 as cited in Hoffman, Beverungen, Rackers and Becker, 2013 p.393) mentioned in his study that citizens are able to build interaction with the government through online means in two ways: “the information dissemination phase in which governments catalogue information for public use” and “transaction-based e-government in which there is e-service delivery”. However, Hoffman, Beverungen, Rackers and Becker (2013) added that Facebook creates a different way of communicating especially in the government where the role of the government as sender becomes more of a facilitator.

In this study, status updates, comments, wall posts, private messages, chat, and groups were explored through contextual analysis where comments and status updates were prominently used by the administrator of the Facebook page of the barangays. Status updates were evident in the posts of the local administrators of the barangays where activities spearheaded by the barangay officials were posted. These include the date, venue and time of the activity. Comments were also a prominent feature of the Facebook pages where the true exchange of communication takes place. The citizens are given opportunities to take part in the discussion which boosts social interaction and engagement. The comments section serves as the place where opinions, ideas, suggestions and the process of communication happens.

Writing format. Two key aspects of infographics are technical writing and precise context. The efficacy of the writing style is measured by how participants understood it through the formatting or structure of the content. As clarified by the experts, writing styles can have various treatments depending on the content and its use. There may be contents wherein it is deemed serious but the way it is written is still reminiscent of the brand voice. Content and its writing style should be aligned to ensure that the message is delivered well to the audience. According to a study conducted by Knight (2015), content should be relatable and personal to a community. The experts mentioned that it should be colloquial. Meaning that it should be able to connect to the language of the masses or the target audience like what iManila (2022) recommended as well. As mentioned, writing should be humanized. Similarly, it is the Filipino language that was chosen and used consistently. The mother-tongue language of most Filipinos makes the content of a Facebook post seem inclusive and conversational. Choosing mother-tongue languages are proven to be useful mediums when it comes to information dissemination as explained by the Department of Education.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of the preferred social media to be used.

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Preferred social media	Facebook	256	64
	Tiktok	43	10
	Instagram	38	9
	Youtube	63	15
TOTAL		400	100

Characteristics of the citizens of each SB in terms of psychographic profile, purpose of using social media, frequency of social media use, level of awareness on the official social media page of the barangay, and the preferred types of content.

As shown in Table 2, Facebook is still the most preferred social media of the residents from Barangay Canalate, Santissima and Sumapang Matanda. The digital report for 2022 showed that Facebook is the third (3rd) highest preferred social media worldwide according to We are Social (2022). However, in the Philippines, Amurthalingam (2022) disclosed that Facebook is indeed the most preferred social media with 48.7% from the total population of 76.01 million. It is evident in the result of the survey with 64% of the respondents choosing Facebook as their preferred social media. This was followed by Tiktok and Instagram. Next is the level of awareness of the respondents which was measured by directly asking whether the respondents have visited the Facebook page of the barangay and whether they are aware of its existence. These were answerable by Yes or No where Yes was given an equivalent of one (1) point, while the No answer was given an equivalent of zero (0). Results showed that most residents know about the existence of the Facebook page of their barangay because they have visited it and they are explicitly aware of it. However, not everyone automatically follows the page despite knowing about its existence.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents' social media use

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of social media use	1 hour a day	65	16
	2-3 hours a day	166	42
	4-5 hours a day	76	19
	6 hours and above	93	23
TOTAL		400	100

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of the respondents' social media usage behavior in terms of their frequency of use within a week. 77% (309) of them spend time online 5-7 times a week, 14% (56) access their social media 2-4 times a week, while 9% (35) use once a week or below. It points out that most of them are spending time online 5-7 times a week. Following the frequency of social media use is the preferred type of content in social media. "Video format posts encourage users to actively engage on fan page by sharing their opinion and comments toward firms' posts, while photo formatted content stimulates passive users' engagement through liking behavior."

Table 4. Frequency distribution of preferred content type

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Preferred content type	Video	186	46
	Photos	132	33
	Posters	54	13
	Announcements	28	7
TOTAL		400	100

As shown in Table 4 above, the respondents have chosen videos as the most preferred content of the Facebook page of their barangay with 46% of votes. The succeeding choices were photos with 33% and posters with 13%. The least among the choices are the announcements which we regularly see through templated format or messaging. Videos are seen to be more engaging because of the content that serve as entertainment to most respondents. Photos, on the other hand, require assessment, therefore requiring more time to dwell on the photo before anyone can make comments. The usual response to the photo is a like while actual comments are given to videos.

Table 5. Frequency distribution of the purpose of social media

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Purpose of using social media	News	30	7
	Information	145	36
	Updates	49	12
	Entertainment	176	44
TOTAL		400	100

Table 5 shows that the respondents use social media, specifically Facebook for entertainment. “Entertainment features prominently among the most important motives for the use of Facebook (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011; Tosun, 2012), and a number of studies have demonstrated a significant positive relationship between entertainment gratifications and the intensity of Facebook use (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Krasnova, Spiekermann, Koroleva, & Hildebrand, 2010)” (Reinecke, Vorderer, and Knop, 2014). In determining the level of engagement of the citizens with their local government Facebook page/account, the researchers randomly picked 50 posts from 2022 to 2021 and computed the posts’ average number of likes, comments and shares. The follow table shows the results for each of the Sangguniang Barangay’s Facebook page/account. Among the three Facebook accounts/pages, Barangay Santisima Trinidad has the highest average of likes with 97.47. Moreover, the same barangay has the highest average of comments with 43.29. Lastly, Barangay Caingin earns the highest average number of shares with 19.88. Meanwhile, the abovementioned data shall be compared on the total number of followers of the Facebook Accounts or Pages to identify the level of engagement. The respondents of Sangguniang Barangay Facebook Pages/Accounts often provide important, sufficient and understandable information. It means that the evaluation on the Facebook accounts/pages is effective in terms of its content.

In addition, the respondents perceived that the information they get from the Facebook page/account is often accurate and they are often satisfied with the information. It indicates that the respondents also find the accuracy of the Facebook page/account as effective. Respondents often get the information from the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account as clear and in useful format. Basically, it reveals that they evaluated the page/account in terms of format. For the ease of use, respondents perceive that their Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account often allows them to use it easily. It indicates that the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account is effective in terms of ease of use because it is user friendly, and it lets the user to navigate easily through it. Regarding the timeliness of the information the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account, the respondents sometimes get up-to-date information. It means that the respondents evaluated the element timeliness as moderately effective. Based on the respondents’ perception, all of the four elements (content, accuracy, format, and ease of use) scored often while in the element Timeliness, the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account only scored sometimes. The final verbal interpretation shows often, this means that the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account is effective based on the respondents’ perception.

Table 6. Facebook features

Features to be improved/added	Percentage
Provides updated news/content	53
Design of the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account	9
Search function	14
All should be improved	24
TOTAL	100

Table 6 relays the features of the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account as suggested by the respondents. 53% of the respondents agreed that the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account should provide updated news/content. Moreover, 24% of them answered that all should be improved. 14% demands for the development of search function, while 9% of the respondents agreed for the improvement of Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account design. Looking closely at the feature that has the highest percentage, it could be seen that majority of the respondents are longing for the further improvement of their Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account in terms of its contents. Moreover, making up the least percentage are respondents who are after the development of the Sangguniang Barangay Facebook page/account’s design or visual appeal.

Conclusion:-

In light of the findings and analysis, this study finds that there is a need for the Sangguniang Barangay to hire an administrator who will serve as their social media manager. Moreover, a technical writer can also supplement the integration and handling of the operation and management of their social media account. On one hand, the hired social media manager will be responsible in managing the technical aspects of the Facebook page. On the other hand, the technical writer will focus on the content and messaging that will be posted in the page. This study also suggests that the Sangguniang Barangay Officials implement a quarterly seminar and training that will help improve the management of their Social Media account. The importance of a quarterly training about the importance of

information dissemination through social media account is an additional need in the Sangguniang Barangay. The training shall be composed of news writing, message/content composition, creation of organic digital poster, information card, audio and video presentation. Meanwhile, the study asserts that the Sangguniang Barangay Community needs to familiarize themselves to the official Facebook Page of their corresponding Barangays by constantly visiting the page. This study also proposes that the Sangguniang Barangay Community consider being a citizen correspondent as well. This may help them explore and be exposed on the information about the Sangguniang Barangay. It is also recommended that they attend seminar and training sessions about the importance of being a responsible social media user. Furthermore, future research on this study can consider expanding the reach of the research in different LGUs, and/or different public offices.

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